

CULTURE AND CHURCH GROWTH

A Study on Cross-Cultural Mission Affected Church Growth
in Korea 1884-1910

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Chang-Shik Lee

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Mr. Chang-Shik Lee,

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

Charlie Kim

C. Dean Froelicher

April 4, 1983
Date

Joseph C. Haugh
Dean

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of rapid growth in the Korean church was striking from the beginning, and has been characteristic ever since. After the Second World War, a variety of studies has appeared on this growth.

In this project, the author attempts to review church growth during the period from 1884 to 1910. This is accomplished from a cross-cultural perspective, with the assumption that church growth has always gone hand in hand with deep appreciation of the diversity of cultures, with immersion in local culture, and with the belief that the introduction of Protestantism into Korea must be understood in relation to certain intercultural factors.

The scope of this study is limited to the period between 1884 and 1910, because it was during this period that the church experienced its most phenomenal growth. The year, 1910, also marked the beginning of a tragic period in Korean history, because Japan annexed Korea by force, and the church was hampered by Japanese control.

In the first part of the study, the human being in culture is discussed, because the author assumes that the Gospel can be effectively transmitted and understood by the people in the cross-cultural mission if a receptor-oriented communication method is employed. Then, the study proceeds to existing conditions which brought about Korea's readiness to receive the Christian Gospel. In the following chapters, the emergence of the Korean church is described as the result of the labors of early missionaries. In the last chapter, this phenomenal

church growth is analyzed, considering the cross-cultural aspects, and reasons for the growth are sought.

The conclusion shows that effective cross-cultural communication, based on hearer-oriented messages, and the culture transformation brought about by Christian faith greatly contributed to church growth in Korea during these years.

INTRODUCTION

As all who are familiar with the history of missions in the past ten decades know, church growth in Korea has been striking. From the beginning, at the end of 19th century, several American overseas mission societies began work in Korea almost simultaneously, and in each case with marked success. Ever since, the Korean church has been characterized by rapid growth.

Today, in Korea, there is a fully grown, self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church of over seven and a half million Protestant church members. All this has been accomplished within less than 100 years of missionary and national activities in the context of intense opposition and much suffering.

During the past decades, a variety of studies has appeared on this rapid growth of the church in Korea. Authors have noted many valid reasons for its growth: favorable environmental factors; the Great Revival of 1907; the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit by God's sovereign grace; the Han-Gul Bible; and Nevius method, devised by a missionary to China who visited Korea during a formative period.

The Goal of This Study

In this study, a principal focus will be on a review of church growth in Korea from 1884 to 1910 with a cross-cultural perspective, since missionary effectiveness and its church growth

have always gone hand in hand with deep appreciation of the diversity of cultures and with immersion in local culture.¹

Everett N. Hunt, Jr., who served as a missionary in Korea from 1958 to 1979, describes an effective way to understand mission work. "The Christian message is never introduced in a vacuum. The introduction of protestant Christianity to Korea can only be fully understood in relation to certain key factors in the Asian-American context."²

In Chapter one of this study, the person in culture is discussed because of an assumption that the Christian message can be fully transmitted and understood without cultural barriers to hearers, only if it is receptor-oriented. In Chapter two, "the setting" - the manner in which Korea was made ready to receive the Christian gospel is described. This includes a brief treatment of Korean history, the structure of the society and the religious beliefs of the people. In Chapter three, the emergence of the Korean church is described with particular reference to the contribution of early missionaries. In Chapter four, the factors behind this phenomenal church growth are analyzed by comparing the early church in Korea with the Biblical model, and reasons for the growth are traced from a cross-cultural perspective.

¹Louis J. Luzbetak, The Church and Cultures. (Techny, IL: Divine Word, 1970), p. 3.

²Everett N. Hunt, Jr., Protestant Pioneers in Korea. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), p. 5.

The Scope of the Historical Background

It should be noted that the scope of this study is limited to the period between 1884 and 1910, because it was during this period that the Korean church experienced its most phenomenal growth. According to Alfred Wasson, beginning in 1911, a significant change took place. Although there was an increase in the number of missionaries and Korean workers, there was also a falling off of numbers of baptisms per year in both the Presbyterian and the Methodist churches. By the year of 1919, total church numbers and probationers were less than in 1911.³ Furthermore, the year 1910 marked a tragic period in Korea's long history: Japan finally annexed Korea to herself and the following 35 years were characterized by oppression, exploitation and religious persecution.

³Alfred W. Wasson, Church Growth in Korea. (New York: International Missionary Council, 1934), p. 78.

CHAPTER I

CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

One of the most significant contemporary issues that Christian missionaries have to deal with is the concept of culture as it is understood by people in the behavioral sciences. Anthropologists and other behavioral scientists say that to be human is to be immersed in a specific culture. Culture concerns both the internal life of people and the immediate environment in which they live.

There are a number of cultures reflected in biblical writings. Furthermore, as the early church spread from Palestine into the Roman world, it encountered other cultures. As the missionary programs advanced through the centuries the same process of church and culture confrontation continued. The problems raised by the encounter between Christianity and culture are especially acute today where missionaries and mission societies labor. In the light of our modern knowledge of culture, how does the Christian missionary function? A further question: once a church is established in a new culture, how does such a church interpret the Christian message in the language and concepts of the culture?

A. Human Beings in Culture

At this point, the aspects of the cultural matrix within

which human beings exist, the people's interaction with one another, and the issue of God in Culture, will be discussed.

Definition of Culture. Anthropologists see culture as "the integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance."¹

Alfred Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn summarize the concept of culture more in detail:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.²

According to most anthropologists, the concepts of culture may be defined as follows: 1) Each human individual is thus born into a particular socio-cultural context. People are conditioned by the members of their society in countless, largely unconscious ways, to accept as natural and to follow rather uncritically the cultural patterns of that society.

2) From this point, humans may be regarded as culture-shaped and culture-transmitting beings. However, they are not only shaped by and participate in the transmission of their culture, but

¹Adamson E. Hoebel, Anthropology. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), p. 6.

²Alfred Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, Culture. (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 357.

they also influence it and contribute to its reshaping.

3) Even though culture governs human physical behavior by such patterns, it also pervasively influences human mental behavior. Culture shapes people's actions and thoughts.

4) Culture, therefore, provides the models of reality that govern perception, although people are likely to be unaware of the influences of their culture upon them.

5) There is a variety of culturally governed logical or conceptual frameworks. Many of these perceptions, conceptualizations, and logical behavior patterns will differ markedly from what culture has conditioned people to perceive or to regard as the logical thing to think or do under similar circumstances.

6) Unless people have been exposed to such perceptions from other cultures and have learned to appreciate the fact that they view reality through very different cultural glasses than their own, they tend unconsciously to look down their noses at their behavior. Behavior seems strange to them, irrational or even wrong. Their customs seem to them to be the right ones because they are the natural ones.

To view other people's ways of life in terms of our own cultural glasses is called ethnocentrism. Becoming conscious of, and analytical about, our own cultural glasses is a painful business.³

7) To come nearest to arriving at an antidote to an ethnocentric monocultural perception of reality is to develop what may be

³R. M. and F. M. Keesing, New Perspectives in Cultural Anthropology. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 21.

termed a cross-cultural perspective.

Worldview. At the core of each culture, there seem to be certain basic assumptions about the nature of reality and morality. These conceptualizations form what is termed the "worldview" of culture.

The "worldview" is the central systematization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the culture assent largely unconsciously and from which stems their value system. The "worldview" lies at the very heart of culture - touching, interacting with, and strongly influencing every other aspect of the culture.

According to Charles H. Kraft, the following functions of "worldview" may be described.⁴ The first function is the explanation of how and why things got to be as they are, and how and why they continue or change. The "worldview" embodies for a people, whether explicitly or implicitly, the basic assumptions concerning ultimate conditions on which they base their lives. If the "worldview" of people leads them to believe that the universe is operated by a number of invisible personal forces, largely beyond their control, this will affect both their understanding of and their response to reality.

Second, the "worldview" serves an evaluational - a judging and validating function. The basic institutions, values, and goals of a given society are ethnocentrically evaluated as best, and

⁴Charles H. Kraft. Christianity in Culture. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 54-56.

sanctioned by the "worldview" of their culture. Other people's customs are judged to be inferior or, at least, inappropriate. For most of the cultures of the world the ultimate ground for these sanctions is supernatural. It is by their God or gods that most people understand their "worldview" and their culture, as a whole, to be validated.

Third, the "worldview" of a group also provides psychological reinforcement. At points of anxiety or crisis in life it is to one's conceptual system that one turns for encouragement to continue or stimulus to take other action. Times of crisis such as death, birth, and illness; transition times such as puberty, marriage, planting and harvest; times of uncertainty; times of elation - all tend to heighten anxiety or in some other way require adjustment between behavior and belief. Each tends to be dealt with in a reinforcing way by the "worldview" of a society.

Fourth, the "worldview" of a culture serves an integrating function. It systematizes and orders perceptions of reality into an overall design. In terms of this integrated and integrating perspective, then, people conceptualize what reality should be and understand and interpret the multifarious events to which they are exposed.

Thus, in its explanatory, evaluational, reinforcing, and integrating functions, "worldview" lies at the heart of a culture, providing the basic model for bridging the gap between the objective reality outside people's minds and the culturally acceptable perception of that reality inside their minds.

Cultural Validity. As has been seen, human beings are at the center of their own perceptual world, and they see their own culture as the most suitable or best and other as less advanced. This becomes the source of ethnocentrism, a tendency of people to judge other cultures by the values and assumptions of their own culture.

Cultural validity is a theory developed by anthropology that maintains that an observer should be careful to evaluate a culture, first in terms of its own values, goals, and focuses, before venturing to compare it with any other cultures. Cultural validity is ordinarily referred to as cultural relativism. This theory is developed to combat the prevailing ethnocentric tendency to evaluate other cultures to their disadvantage by always focusing on areas of life in which the evaluator's culture has specialized. Comparisons between cultures tend, therefore, to be made unfairly on the basis of whatever criteria are deemed important by the one who does the comparing.

Anthropologists have found that "it is objectively impossible to distinguish world-wide levels of cultural progress."⁵ They have concluded that cultures are to be regarded, not as assignable to some level of overall superiority or inferiority with respect to other cultures, but, rather, as more or less equal to each other in their overall ability to meet the needs felt by their members. Rather than moralizing about the good or bad in the given culture, we should accept

⁵A. Beals and H. Hoijer, An Introduction to Anthropology. (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 720.

the validity of the culture.

None can be considered anywhere near perfect, since all are shaped and operated by sinful human beings.⁶ None, in its healthy state, is to be considered invalid, inadequate, or unusable by God and humankind. Melville Herskovits says, "the very core of cultural relativism is the discipline that comes of respect for difference - of mutual respect."⁷

We need to recognize that cultures are essentially equal rather than superior or inferior to each other with respect to at least three things: 1) their adequacy for those immersed in them, 2) the pervasiveness of the expression of human sinfulness manifested in and through them, and 3) their potential usefulness as vehicles of God's interaction with humanity.⁸

B. Transforming Culture with God

A change in a culture, if it involves a radical (though usually slow) revision of the meaning conveyed by means of the cultural form involved, may be called transformational. This transformation refers to the nature and intensity of change rather than to any distinctly different kind of change. Many such changes take place quite naturally within culture.

In Christian transformational change within culture, there are two cultural aspects assumed: 1) culture is always in the process of change, and 2) God desires to participate with human beings in

⁶Romans 3:23.

⁷Melville J. Herskovits, Man and His Works. (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 77.

⁸Kraft, p. 52.

guiding culture change for God's divine purpose.

When people, in partnership with God, are engaged in the process of cultural transformation; there is always an aim, a direction to the change, that is different from that of a transformational change motivated by some other set of factors. This aim is to increase the suitability of the culture to serve as a vehicle for divine-human interaction for the salvation of humankind.

This is the kind of change that eventually did away with polygamy in Hebrew culture, so that by New Testament times the custom was disapproved and very seldom practiced. Over a period of several centuries the Hebrew people had developed culturally appropriate alternative forms to fulfill the functions decreasingly served by polygamy. A new way of looking after the rights and needs of widows was one thing that had to be developed.⁹

The transformational process, however, is not easy, since habits of long standing are not ordinarily replaced rapidly or without trauma. The slower the transformation takes place, the fewer and less drastic are the changes that have to be made at any given point in time.

True transformational change is a matter of change in the central conceptualizations of a culture; the "worldview" - that which governs the way the members of that culture perceive reality. It also governs the output or response of its people to that reality.

⁹Acts 6:1, James 1:27.

When change occurs in the "worldview", its effects ripple throughout the rest of the culture. Changes in any of the other aspects of culture also produce ripples, but such ripples result in pervasive change in the total culture only to the extent that change is effected in the "worldview". From there, change is generated throughout the culture.

In attempting to bring about change at the "worldview" level, a basic problem of the transformational approach is how to keep up the pressure for change while at the same time assuring that such change will be minimally traumatic. We have to discover ways to bring about the desired change constructively rather than destructively and press for such change in Christian rather than unchristian ways.

The Christian transformation process is always paralleled by the processes of Christian witness and conversion. In both transformational processes the same steps need to be followed. First, a change of allegiance must be ushered in. In the second place, a concomitant change in the evaluational principles must be experienced. Third, a resultant series of new habits of behavior emerges.

Conversion means a turning away from old ways toward new ways, a basic reorientation in premises and goals, a wholehearted acceptance of a new set of values affecting the convert as well as his social group, day in and day out, twenty-four hours of the day and in practically every sphere of activity - economic, social, and religious.¹⁰

For the innovator of culture change, Charles H. Kraft says that cultural insiders who are members of the culture can make changes

¹⁰Louis J. Luzbetak, The Church and Cultures. (Techny, IL: Divine Word, 1970), p. 6.

within their own culture, while advocates who came from other cultures can only inspire the members to change their own culture.

An outsider, though he may appeal for change, is limited to his ability to win over some insider who will then effect the changes from within.¹¹

At this point, it is appropriate to apply this advocate-innovator concept to Christian transformation of culture which is effected by winning new converts. There are important things that can be done by missionaries, out-culture advocates, but these must not be confused with what may be done by new converts who are cultural insiders. Christians are anxious that culture change be effected by the infusion of Christian concepts into the cultural context. However, the key factor for facilitating any change is the development of some alteration in a personal or group perception of reality. Insiders may function only as innovators and in-culture advocates of change.

Kraft summarizes important factors that every advocate of cross-cultural change ought to keep in mind. First of all, advocates of change must seek to understand the cultural element from the point of view of the unprejudiced observer and try not to judge the culture from the advocates point of view.

One need not approve of the custom or attitude, but Christian concern dictates that one respect the point of view of the other culture. Those within that culture were taught the integrated lifestyle of which that element is a part in the same way that we were taught our

¹¹Kraft, p. 75.

lifestyle. They accepted it as the correct way of life as uncritically as we accepted our own culture.

In the second place, advocates seeking effective change should try to encourage a minimum number of critical changes in the "worldview", rather than a large number of peripheral changes. Peripheral changes, such as forcing a Confucian society like Korea to leave ancestor worship, are more likely to prove hindrances than helps to true Christian transformation because of the way the changes are brought about, not because the changes themselves are undesirable. They tend to ripple misleading information into the "worldview". Ancestor worship in Korea provided the people with little assistance with the basic problems of world view readjustment. Rippling inward to the worldview, therefore, moved messages concerning God, such as: the people have turned against their traditional leaders because they continue with ancestor worship and revolt against traditional customs, in general. The Catholic church, which prohibited its members from engaging in ancestor worship, caused a severe persecution in 1866 in Korea where ancestor worship was a central element in state control of the people.¹²

The core concept should be transformed first and the people's understanding of such peripheral matters as ancestor worship should follow in due time and with minimum trauma, under the leading of God. Without the interference of the static caused by outside pressure to

¹²L. George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1970), p. 42.

change such a peripheral custom, the message of God will be heard as good news concerning salvation to change their worldview rather than bad news concerning ancestor worship.

A third important factor in advocating change relates to those to whom the appeal is initially made. God is interested in seeing whole groups of people turn to Him rather than minimum numbers of people who are dislocated from the society and enjoy the separation. According to the gospels, God commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28: 19-20) and also asked us to become as yeast mixed into the community so that the "whole batch of dough (community) rises" becoming the Kingdom of heaven (Mt. 13:33). After a study of the society, then, outside advocates need to appeal to the community to alter their views and influence the rest of the society to alter its views.

Fourth, and closely related to the previous factor, is the recognition that transformation is accomplished more effectively and efficiently if advocated by groups than if advocated simply by individuals. Throughout the history of the world, social changes were brought about by great leaders of conviction; however, these changes always took place among the people of the society. Even a great leader without followers cannot make any innovations in the society, since a change is placed on the people's value system, and the world view of society is shared by the people. This is why movements are of such great importance in cultural transformation. "Social change

of any magnitude at all cannot be made by individuals."¹³ When people come in groups, the process of cultural transformation is typically both facilitated and accelerated. Appeals for both conversion and cultural transformation should, for maximum effectiveness, be directed primarily to socially homogeneous groupings of people and to leaders who will influence such groups.

The final factor to be dealt with here is the time factor. If transformation is to be effective it needs to take place both at the level of thought and at the level of behavior. Developing the habitual behavior appropriate to new conceptualizations ordinarily takes a considerable amount of time.

According to culture change theory in the process of transforming culture, it is better to encourage change in such a way that (a) only a bare minimum of basic changes in worldview are recommended at its first stage, (b) the appeal for such changes is made to opinion leaders who, when convinced, will influence large numbers of their compatriots, (c) attention devoted, on the one hand, to providing the Scriptures in their language and, on the other, to providing instruction in how to use the Scriptures in direct dependence upon the Holy Spirit as their point of reference for Christian transformation.

C. Receptor Oriented Message

The cultural transformation effected by foreign mission work

¹³L. P. Gerlach and V. H. Hine, People, Power, Change. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p. 42.

is always based upon the efficient intercultural communication in its evangelism. There are no such symbols with universal meanings.¹⁴ Human beings live in different contexts or frames of reference, and all the symbols or cultural forms by means of which people can communicate derive their meanings totally from the frame of reference in which they participate.

If effective communication is to take place it must be possible for both the communicator and the receptor to attach similar meanings to the symbols employed. This implies that they must be operating within a common context or frame of reference. If persons speak no common language and have no culturally defined common agreements concerning the sounds and gestures they use, their ability to communicate with each other will be virtually non-existent. An unabridged barrier to communicative interaction exists between them.

Sharing a frame of reference will involve primarily a common understanding of cultural and linguistic expressions. The common cultural involvement of persons of the same culture ordinarily means that each will be able to make a high proportion of correct assumptions concerning what the other person means to convey through the use made of linguistic and cultural jargon. They risk the possibility of losing their hearers if their frame of reference is not shared by their hearers. Such is often the case when Christians attempt to witness to non-Christians by using such as "be saved", "grace" and "sin", etc.

¹⁴Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 89-93.

The frame of reference chosen for the communication can be that of either participant but with a different impact, depending on whose set of categories is employed. There are approaches which a missionary might choose in cross-cultural evangelism, and they are approaches of extraction and of identification. If the communicator demands that it be his, rather than the hearer's frame of reference that provides the communicational categories, the approach may be labeled "extractionist."¹⁵ Communicators seek to teach receptors to understand and look at reality in terms of their own models and perspectives.

There is another approach besides the extractionist. If the communicator adopts the receptor's frame of reference for expressing the communication, we may call the approach "Identificational."¹⁶ In this approach, messengers of the receptor attempt to fit their messages to the categories and felt needs of that frame of reference. Communicators employing this approach first attempt to learn where their hearer is and what needs the hearer feels before attempting to present any answers.

The aims of both the identificational and the extractionist approach are similar: to lead the receptors into an experience with God through Christ. The approach of the extractionist, however, requires a high degree of indoctrination involving a long period of dependence upon the communicator for instruction in order to be effective; while identificational advocates, without denying the

¹⁵Kraft, p. 151.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 152.

receptors' understanding, attempt to fill in the blank by initially communicating only that part of their understanding of God that answers the receptors' felt need. By this means communicators identify both themselves and their messages with an appropriate part of the hearers' frame of reference and lead them gently from their own keenly felt need to the Christian answer to that need.

The identificational approach seems to be more in keeping with the approach of the early Christians. Kraft refers this to the Bible:

Christ himself, working on an interpersonal though not an intercultural level, started with the felt needs of his potential receptors, adopting their frame of reference as that in terms of which he operated. He dealt with Nicodemus in terms of his Pharisaic understanding, with the Samaritan woman in terms of her background, with the disciples in still other ways, with Zaccaeus differently yet. He told the rich young ruler to follow him (Mk. 10:21) but forbade the demoniac to (Lk. 8:38-39). Jesus was not being inconsistent - he was very consistent in his principle of working with each person in terms of that person's frame of reference. The apostle Paul, in keeping with the same identificational approach, determined to be Jewish when attempting to communicate with Jews and Greeks when attempting to communicate interculturally with Greeks (1 Cor. 9:19-22). He provides a prototypical example of an identificational approach when he says, in speaking to a group of Athenian philosophers.¹⁷

Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked through your city and looked at the placed where you worship, I found also an altar on which is written, "To an Unknown God." That which you worship, then even though you do not know it, what I now proclaim to you.¹⁸

In another example of receptor oriented communication, Eugene A. Nida speaks of the incarnation, the biblical model of God's communication with man, showing that God's truth, "in all its infinite character, has to be communicated within the narrow confines

¹⁷Kraft, p. 154.

¹⁸Acts 17:22-23.

of human language and culture. This can be done only by radical adjustment and employment of the grid of human experience, as reflected in a particular culture at a particular time." ¹⁹

According to this interpretation, God is not one who speaks into thin air, but one who comes all the way to human beings where they are. In closing the gap between Himself and His creatures, God does not merely build a bridge halfway across, calling to us to erect a structure from our end to span the open area. Rather, God employs our language, our culture, our principles of communication. He reveals Himself as a receptor.

God's revelation is not simply a matter of adding new information to that which human beings already have, but is beyond the information itself is the stimulus to behavioral change that can result from the communication of messages with impact. God's message, like all effective communication, is not intended simply to impress or inform his audience. It is intended to be expressive and imperative, as well. Nida and C. R. Taber describe it: God seeks to,

present the message in such a way that people can feel its relevance (the expressive element in communication) and can respond to it in action (the imperative function).²⁰

D. Summary

By making disciples of all nations and by teaching them to

¹⁹Nida, p. 221.

²⁰Eugene A. Nida and C. R. Taber, The Theory and Practice of Translation. (Leiden: Brill, 1969), p. 24.

observe all that Jesus Christ commanded, God wants to transform human cultures through us in history. In this process, God has revealed Himself to us by employing the communicational principles outlined above. He came all the way to identify specifically with us in the human condition in which we were culturally immersed.

We, therefore, as his disciples also employ these principles to carry the final commission of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTING (1884-1910) FOR THE GROWTH

A. History of the Nation

The history of Korea goes back to the time of the mythical King Tangun, who descended from heaven and formed the kingdom of Chosun (B.C. 2333). It is, however, to King Ki ja (Ch'itzu in Chinese) that the Korean people trace their civilization (B.C. 1122). Kija is said to have been a refugee from China at the time of the fall of the Shan Dynasty. The dynasty he founded appears to have lasted for nearly a thousand years, extending to the second century before Christ.¹

From the first century B.C. the land was ruled by three independent kingdoms, Koguryo in the north, Paekche in the southwest and Silla in the southeast. The kingdom of Silla was by far the most highly civilized of the three. Silla was an eminently peaceful and benevolent rule and paid more attention to the furtherance of tranquility than to the arts of war. Koguryo in the north was just the opposite. Koguryo was constantly at war either with one of her sister states or with China, and it was no mean antagonist. At one time Koguryo stretched far beyond the Yalu river, and was able to defy the armies of China. The kingdom of Paekche was like neither

¹James Scarth Gale, History of the Korean People. (Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society, 1972), pp. 93-96.

of the other two, attending neither to the arts of peace nor to those of war. Paekche, however, introduced Buddhism and Confucianism to Japan. A scholar named Wang-in introduced the Analects and thousand character classic to Japanese. After some centuries of mutual independence and interdecline strife, Koguryo and Paekche both disappeared, and practically the entire country was unified in the seventh century A.D. under the king of Silla.

The unification thus brought about proved to mark a turning point in the history of the Korean people. The whole peninsula at long last was united under a single rule, and the people began to feel cultural identity and power, and the nation developed rapidly. As a result, Koreans became one homogeneous race ruled by one king. As George Paik has pointed out; "It was the language, the law, and the civilization of Silla that welded the Koreans into a homogeneous people and laid the foundation for modern Korea."² This unity, brought about by Silla's activity, also laid the foundation for the subsequent growth of the church in Korea. This took place much later - toward the end of nineteenth century. Furthermore, the highly civilized mechanical and industrial skills of Silla contributed to a distinct Korean culture, separate from that of China and other adjacent countries. Today, one who visits the museum in Kyongju, the ancient capital of Silla, is surprised to see the golden crowns, claw-shaped jade ornament and

²L. George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1970), p. 15.

other artistic creations handed down from the kingdom of Silla.

For upwards of three centuries Silla retained the management of the whole country. This period was followed by centuries of rapid decline. Luxury sapped the springs of power. The court became corrupt and contemptible, and, in the end, the hardy general Wang-Gun revolted and set up the new kingdom of Koryo.

In 918 A.D., the Koryo dynasty succeeded Silla. This dynasty marked the beginning of Korea's medieval history. One of the major events during this dynasty was the invasion of the Mongols. It is said that the mongol invasion of Korea in the thirteenth century had, as its ultimate objective, the conquest of Japan. When the Mongols led their victorious army across the Yalu river and move southward, terrifying the country, the capital of the Koryo dynasty was removed to Kwangwha island off the west coast of the nation. This remained the capital from 1232 to 1270. After the succession of Kublai Khan to the Mongol throne, the Mongol policy of conquest was changed and became conciliatory toward Korea.³ The Mongols withdrew all their troops from the country and returned all the war prisoners of the Koryo army. Finally, the capital was restored. Nonetheless, the dynasty had suffered seriously by this invasion. Toward the end of the fourteenth century, Korea, once again, was invaded - this time by the Red Heads (Hong-dus in Chinese) from the wilds of Manchuria. This invasion eventually brought about the fall of the

³Gale, p. 202.

Koryo dynasty.

Another cause of the fall of this dynasty was the adoption of Buddhism as the state religion. Buddhism and Confucianism had both been adopted by the Koryo dynasty, and both had prospered. The former flourished as the state religion, and leading monks were honored in much the same way as Popes and archbishops in western countries. These monks had great influence on the court, and their misuse of power brought about the ruin of the dynasty.⁴

In 1392, the Yi dynasty was founded by general Yi Song-gye, who became its first king. This was just a century before Columbus discovered the new world. This new dynasty inaugurated a great reform program that included the eradication of Buddhist influences in the court and its replacement with a revived Confucianism. This change was aided by Korea's friendly relationship with China and precipitated the rise of political parties, beginning in the middle of the sixteenth century. Confucianist scholars differed among themselves on governmental policies. It was inevitable that struggles and factional fights would follow. This party struggle was followed by a Japanese invasion in 1592. As a result, the government was removed a second time to Kwangwha island. The Koreans fought bravely against the Japanese. A Korean admiral, Yi Soon-shin invented the first iron-clad warship and, during a naval engagement in the waters of southern Korea, commanded it so effectively that the Japanese began to withdraw.

⁴Woo-Keun Han, The History of Korea. (Seoul: Eul-Yoo, 1970), p. 185.

In the end, with the aid of the Chinese, they succeeded in driving back the invaders. The loss of life was so great, the devastation of the fairest and most fertile portions of the land so extensive, and the destruction of national treasures so vast, that Korea never completely recovered from this disaster. All this untold misery and suffering served to seal Korea seclusively against Japan and other nations for nearly three centuries and to permanently crystallize the hatred of the Koreans for the Japanese.

Korea then became a seclusive nation. Its people turned their attention inward to reflect on the eternal aspects of messianic expectations and to other worldly salvations rather than to the power of the government or to seeking assistance from other countries. Even though many have pointed out that the messianic expectations of the Korean people were based on their animistic beliefs, it remains true that when the Gospel of Jesus Christ reached the nation, the people responded promptly to Him because of these expectations.⁵ The messianic component was really transformed into the Christian messianism described in the Scriptures.

The Yi dynasty continued until the Japanese, once again, took over the country at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1894 and 1895 Japanese armies fought China, in part on Korean soil. The Chinese defeat left Japan in control. Russia also had designs on Korea and struggled to gain control of the country by fighting with Japan in 1904 and 1905, again partly on Korean soil. Once again Japan

⁵Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity. (Seoul: Hollym, 1967), p. 92.

was the victor. This time Japan was assured of absolute control over Korea and finally annexed Korea in 1910. This meant the end of Korea's Yi dynasty. The Korean people were no longer free and independent, and the rule of Japan was very harsh. About this time its response to Christianity was so great that eventually Korea became the only country of continental Asia in which Christianity was the dominant religious force.

Throughout its long history, Korea has known suffering and destruction, largely caused by foreign oppressions and invasions. The fundamental underlying fact in the tragedy of Korea is its geographical position. Korea is located strategically in the Far East. This fact is well recognized by the adjacent countries of China, Japan and Russia. Since the nation has often been the target of foreign invasion, Korea has been called "the Balkans of the Orient".

Because of experiencing tragedy throughout their history, the people of Korea have nurtured a fierce resentment against external oppressions, while eagerly desiring freedom and peace. This hope for peace on the part of Korean people may be seen in their daily greetings: "May you come in peace" is the equivalent of "Hello", "May you go in peace" is "Good-bye", and "May you go to bed in peace" is "Good Night".

When the people of Korea first heard the words of Jesus Christ: "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of you affliction," and "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you," they could easily and promptly respond to the message and turn to Jesus Christ without

feeling the tension of cross-cultural barriers, because they were so conscious of the need for peace in their daily lives.⁶

B. Structure of the Society

The Land. Korea is a peninsula projecting southward out of the northeastern corner of the Asiatic mainland, separating the Yellow and Eastern seas at a point where China and Soviet Siberia meet. It has an area of 85,156 square miles. In length it is about 660 miles, with an average width of 130 miles. Its eastern and western shores are washed respectively by the Eastern Sea and the Yellow Sea. The southern extremity is separated from Japan by the Korean Strait, and its northern boundary is formed by the Tuman and the Yalu rivers. Along its western coast are many islands.

Geographically, Korea is located at the heart of the Far East. It separates China, Japan and the Soviet Union, and it also connects them. Korea is at once a protective shield to China, to Russia's outlet to the Pacific Ocean, and to Japan's bridge to the Asiatic mainland. Therefore, in time of war it is a battle ground, and in time of peace it is a highway of civilization and culture. Through this highway, Buddhism found its way to Japan. While the Koreans learned much from the Chinese, the Japanese drew from Korea the arts of peace and good-will.

The People. As R. B. Dixon states, "The Korean is still

⁶Mark 5:34 and John 14:27.

uncertain in his affiliation."⁷ No one is able to speak as authoritatively of the origin and the character of the Korean race as of the country. Although the origin and ethnic relationships of the Korea people are, as yet, an unsolved problem; ordinarily Koreans are regarded as a mixed race: the Mongol element dominating in the north, as might be expected, and the Caucasians in the south. This judgment seems to be confirmed by what is known of early movements, migrations and displacements of the peoples of northeast Asia shortly after the dawn of history.

It may be said that one of the characteristics of the Korean people is their extreme conservatism. Among the people, there still exists a strong tendency to adhere to the old and familiar patterns that have characterized their ancestors. Homer B. Hulbert, an early missionary to Korea, pointed out that Koreans see "no statesmen, warriors, scholars or artists today that are in any way comparable with those of former times."⁸ When missionaries first encountered this tendency among the people, they tried to correct it by drawing the people away from their conservatism through appealing to their felt-needs. They stressed the dimension of progress through the use of biblical perspectives. In the end, however, they merely replaced Korean traditionalism with Christian conservatism, which persists today. This tendency must be replaced with new forms of conservatism even

⁷R. B. Dixon, The Racial History of Man. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 285.

⁸Homer B. Hulbert, The Passing of Korea. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), p. 35.

though there is nothing that will long resist the demands of interest.

Another characteristic of the Korean people is their religiousness. Koreans have long considered heaven as the source of both mercy and wrath. In addition to their animistic beliefs, they developed a concept of hierarchy of the gods with the supreme god. "Hananim" is designated as the Heavenly One. The Christians use this name for the God and Father of Lord Jesus Christ. Even as animists, they believed in the power of Hananim to decide the destiny of mankind below and prayed to Him for bumper crops or for safety on their sea voyages. Among the many exclamations in the Korean language are two which underscore this reality. The name Hananim is shouted when some extraordinary emergency arises. "Learn to fear Heaven" is the cry when someone does something completely unacceptable. This belief is based on animism. Heaven was respected because of its vastness and its light. For this reason, human dignity was often associated with heaven; this finally produced the philosophy of Tonghak (in 1860) which means Eastern Learning, and which provided its basic concept; the equation of the power of heaven with that of man.⁹ Of course, the component of faith in heaven had been an integral part of Korean thought since primitive times.

Another marked characteristic of the Koreans is their courtesy. Throughout their history, the Korean people have never invaded their

⁹Han, pp. 354-356.

neighbors. According to ancient Chinese records, it was the custom of the Korean people, being so courteous to each other, to avoid walking on the road, fearing each could hinder the movement of the other. Korea was thus known as the Eastern Land of Courtesy. Because they were not self-assertive, they seldom cultivated overseas colonies, nor did they seek to develop lands outside their given boundaries. Foreigners to the south of the nation, or those of the northern territories were regarded as barbarians. It is tragic that these barbarians eventually subjugated the Korean people. As a result, Korea has known long years of colonial suffering. On the other hand, however, this custom of being so courteous to each other has enabled the Western Christian missionaries to enter the country and work with the people. Koreans were found to be most receptive when they heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially the Sermon on the Mount.

Socio-Cultural Setting. At the time of Korea's first contacts with the western world, in the nineteenth century, it could be said that this highly developed ancient civilization had reached its lowest point. The government was an absolute monarchy with a well-intentioned but weak king at its head, and its bureaucratic machinery was dominated by selfish, corrupt, and intriguing ministers.

The Yi dynasty, initiated by General Yi Song-gye in 1392, marked the apotheosis of Neo-Confucian power in Korea. Building on the basis on many elements of Chinese civilization which had flooded

into Korea during previous centuries, the Yi kings took their political inspiration from the Confucian classics and from the Chinese practice of the T'ang (618-905) and Ming (1368-1628) dynasties. The first king and his immediate successors faced domestic and international problems for which Confucianism appeared to offer plausible solutions. Confucian doctrines served to safeguard the authority of both the monarchy and the scholar-official bureaucratic class.¹⁰ They had been pressed into service to establish order and to solidify the new dynasty. Monarchical rule was viewed as the sole means of political centralization and internal peace. The king stood at the head of a truly paternalistic government, and filial piety formed the basis of the state; the ruler was the father-king and the people were regarded as his children.

The Korean people assiduously studied the Confucian classics - particularly Chu Hsi's interpretation of them. They saw that the object of the civil administration was to maintain or restore the cosmic balance. This meant that the chief goal was to bring human affairs into accord and balance within the well-defined natural law. The Korean world of thought among the elite was governed by the foundation of two primal forces or modes of creation, um-yang (Chinese: yin-yang), and the cycle of five elements, o-haeng (Chinese: wu-hsing). These forces embraced not only all material things but all aspects of domestic life and spiritual existence.

¹⁰Sung-nyong Lee (ed.) Korean Studies Today. (Seoul: Institute of Asian Studies, Seoul National University, 1970), pp. 263-265.

Confucianism was primarily an ethical doctrine, and politics could not be considered apart from ethics. Emphasis lay on the social rather than the political control of the individual. At the heart of social control was the principle of li, which was identical with fundamental morality. The goal was social harmony.¹¹

The procedure for securing this harmony stressed: 1) Ranking of the population into a consistent order of superiority and inferiority, emphasizing the feeling of status and the distinction of social ranks: 2) Proper observance of cardinal relationships; righteousness between master and servant, affection between father and son, deference between husband and wife, degrees between older and younger, faith between friends. Three of these five dealt with family. Its members were recognized only by their mutually different levels of privilege and responsibility. The fundamental feature of the family system was the father-elder son relationship, not that of husband and wife, as is characteristic in the western world.

The social stratification in traditional Korean society was divided into six classes. In addition, there was an outcast group. These classes were: the royalty, the nobility (Yangban), the country gentry (Hyangban), the middle fold (Chung-in), the illegitimate sons of the nobility (Soja), the commoners (Sangmin), plus the humble folk (Chonmin).¹²

¹¹Yi-Sup Hong, Korea's Self Identity. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1973), p. 97.

¹²Han, p. 247.

While the Yangban class possessed many privileges, such as wealth, honors and the exclusive right to fill public office, the vast bulk of the Korean population fell into the class of commoners or Sangmin. They were producers, such as farmers, artisans, and merchants. Only commoners had to pay taxes and contribute their service to the state through military service and other duties. The Yangban and their slaves paid only the land tax. The Chonmin, humble people, were at the bottom of the social ladder. They possessed no institutional means of expressing their opinions and had little hope of attaining education or governmental office through the examination system. In general, however, the Korean peasantry rested easily under the administration of the upper classes.

The existence of a profound distinction between the patrician class and the common people resulted in all manner of inequity. The patricians were characterized by false pride, sham, self-conceit, and everything that is vague and vain, while they robbed the common people of ambition and the incentive for bettering themselves. The aged-old custom of ancestor worship intensified the natural desire of men for children, especially for male offspring. This led the people to immorality and assigned women to a low social position. Indeed, in the early nineteenth century the country was in dire need of a progressive, wholesome and energetic infusion of the spirit of life. This infusion was brought by the Christian missionaries. Spencer J. Palmer describes the infusion brought by the Christian missionaries.

Protestantism taught that all men could be saved by the mercy of an omnipotent God, regardless of how dejected or sinful their condition. This had great appeal to the underprivileged illegitimate sons of the Yangban, to women, and to the common folk, from which the overwhelming majority of converts to these two faiths derived.

To most Koreans who joined Christian churches, however, the conclusion had been reached that agonies which could not be relieved by reason could be relieved by religious conviction. They wanted an escape from pain. They wanted freedom from oppression, both internal and external. One cannot fail to recognize this messianic hope in the great Pyongyang revival of 1907 and of subsequent evangelistic enterprise that followed.¹³

C. Religious Beliefs of the People

The religious life of the Korean people manifests itself in three separated and unrelated faiths. There is, first of all, shamanism, a form of animistic nature worship consisting of the worship of nature and the fear of spirits. Second, there is Buddhism, and third, the practice of the teachings of Confucianism.

Shamanism. Shamanism is the most ancient and the most widespread form of religious belief and practice in Korea today.¹⁴ It supports a vast number of gods, demons, and demi-gods - the legacy of centuries of nature worship. Korean people believe that the earth, air, and sea are filled with supernatural beings whose very multiplicity makes them ubiquitous and whose potential power for good or evil demand worship. An intelligent Korean in his shamanism would maintain that he does not worship any material objects.

¹³Palmer, pp. 93-94.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 8.

He is only concerned to revere the inner spiritual presence. He may also apologize for observing minute details touching ceremonial cleanliness; he is primarily concerned with moral dimensions of life. Nonetheless, the average Korean's worship is an expression of his fears. He prays for personal benefits and for relief from trouble but appears little concerned to secure from the spirits assurance in developing moral character. Actually, the worship of spirits dwarfs and debases the moral nature, and dread spirit espionage of the world fills the hearts of the people with fear.

Shamanism is mainly based on fear, and the devotee is required to appease a vast number of spirits and demons who are thought to inhabit the trees, mountains, stones and streams. This appeasing is done through a mediator: the shaman who is thought to have intimate relations with the spirit world. Through autohypnotism or trance, the shaman becomes the mediator between the spirits and mankind. Korean shamanism bears many resemblances to that found in primitive Siberian society, and it must have been introduced into the peninsula when the earliest tribes migrated southward.¹⁵ In Korea, three classes of shamans are noted: the Moodangs - women specially skilled in driving out evil spirits, and Paksoos - men who perform the same function as the Moodangs, and the Pansoos - those who are blind and for this reason are thought to have special powers of perception within the spirit world. Shamanism has little concern for moral

¹⁵William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion. (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 382.

character. It is a religion without definite form or system, but it is the religion of the masses, and its superstitious practices have an almost universal hold upon the common people in Korea today.

Buddhism. This religion was introduced by way of China in 372 AD during the time of the three kingdoms of Korea. A monk by the name of Sundo was the Buddhist apostle, sent by Fu-Kien, a monarch of the Chin dynasty.¹⁶ Buddhism reached Koguryo, first, and, subsequently, the other two kingdoms. Under royal patronage it became popular, and for nearly fifteen hundred years it was Korea's dominant faith. In its early days, when conviction was sufficiently strong to inspire its devotees with missionary zeal and ardor, it was propagated widely, not only throughout the peninsula, but nearly into Japan.¹⁷ It gradually extended its sway until, in the latter years of the Koryo dynasty, it had become the greatest political and intellectual force in the nation. Its devotees built many great temples and monastries and accumulated extensive libraries. Eventually, the Buddhist priesthood became corrupt through prosperity and many priests gradually cast aside their religious vocation and entered politics.¹⁸ Priests thronged to the courts and council halls of the monarch, administered the great offices of the realm, marshalled armies in time of war, and eventually

¹⁶Han, P. 45.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁸Gale, p. 230.

placed an offspring of a priest on the throne.

In time, however, the Buddhist priest-ridden politics had a demoralizing and disastrous effect upon the people. The bleakest pages of the history of Buddhism in Korea were in the waning years of the Koryo dynasty. The tenets of the cult - among them chastity, abstinence, and self-abnegation - had been flagrantly violated. The monasteries became great centers of evil and tainted all society with their moral corruption. As Buddhism had exchanged its core of religious thought for political activism, so the reformation, which nearly annihilated it in Korea, was primarily political. One of the earliest reforms administered under the founder of the Yi dynasty was the cleansing of this Augean stable. Buddhism fell into disgrace. Its priests were exiled from the capital city. By the nineteenth century only a few of its monasteries remained, and they had little hold on the people.¹⁹ At the time of the introduction of Christianity into Korea, priests were prohibited from even entering the capital city of Seoul. Since World War II there has been a significant resurgence of religious Buddhism in S. Korea.

Confucianism. With the decline of Buddhism, Confucianism gained ascendancy, and in it Christianity was to meet its most powerful rival. C. A. Clark has written that the ancient Chinese philosophical writings that Confucius later organized into a system of thought and practice were first introduced into Korea by Kija some five hundred years before

¹⁹Han, p. 185.

the birth of this Chinese sage.²⁰ That is to say, the proverbs, the ritual and the code of moral conduct, which Confucius edited and compiled, had been a part of Korean culture from the time of her first contact with Chinese civilization.

The first Korean scholar to study abroad was Choe Chi-won, who went to China in 875 AD. He sojourned in Chang-An, the capitol of the Tang dynasty. After having been abroad for ten years, he returned to Korea, introduced the Chinese classics into Korea, and became the father of Korean literature.²¹

During the golden age of Buddhism under the Koryo dynasty, Confucianism was neglected. After the Yi dynasty succeeded Koryo in 1392 AD, this new dynasty replaced the eradicated Buddhist influence with a revived Confucianism. Confucianism became the state religion, and mastery of its classics was essential to appointment to office. Loyalty to the King, faithfulness to friends, conjugal fidelity, and fraternal love were all inculcated as cardinal Confucian virtues. Above all, filial piety was at the root of all moral principles.²² Ancestor worship, which can be called a religion in itself, was the inevitable result of extending filial piety to the dead.

For the last five hundred years Confucianism has held unlimited sway over the minds and hearts of the Korean people. Despite the ethical teachings of Confucianism, George Paik has pointed out:

²⁰Allen D. Clark, History of the Korean Church. (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1961), p. 91.

²¹Han, pp. 105-106.

²²Ibid., p. 61.

"...(it) did not prevent the oppression of the masses, general poverty, the treachery and corruption of officialdom, and the degradation of womanhood which were characteristic of Korea in the last century...it encouraged selfishness, exalted filial piety to the position of the highest virtue and made this hide a multitude of sins; it imbued every follower with a hunger for office which resulted in simony and sinecure."²³

It was Confucianism that formed the character of the people and shaped the course of the ancient Korean civilization. Korea accepted the imported system from China and made it part of the bone and muscle of the people. Confucius, himself, shed little light on the concepts of god, soul, and immortality. It was Chu-Hsi, a Chinese, a singularly skilled neo-orthodox scholar in Confucian doctrine, who identified god with reason and law.²⁴ Korean Confucianists further developed this idea and developed the conception of a personal god. These were significant and interesting additions to the philosophy of Confucianism.

These three religions - Shamanism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are the relevant one today. Shamanism, which appeals to the hearts of the masses but inspires fear and awe, has made the Korean people very superstitious. Buddhism has offered them its benevolent and thoughtful-looking divinities, who meet their wants both in the present life and beyond death. With temples, priests, and sacred writings, it has made the Koreans a religious people. Confucianism, with its

²³Paik, p. 24.

²⁴Han, p. 183.

ethical codes, has contributed greatly to the cultured man, the citizen, but has poured little spiritual content into the hearts of the people. For the masses, these three cults became syncretized and fused. The average Korean does not look upon these three ancient religious faiths as mutually exclusive. The Korean will recite the classics of Confucius, pray to the Buddhist deities, offer sacrifices to his ancestors and tremble in superstitious dread as he passes the shrines of the mountain demons. This easy tolerance of conflicting religious ideas was to become a serious barrier to the faith which would teach as its first commandment; "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."²⁵

D. Summary

It should be noted that a significant factor in Christianity's entry into Korea was that, as was the case with these three religions, it was introduced from a foreign country. Confucianism came from China, Buddhism from India and Shamanism from Siberia. Korea differed, in this respect, from Japan, China and many other countries whose nationalistic religions reacted with patriotic fanaticism against the introduction of any foreign faith. For this reason, it might have been expected that once initial suspicion had been broken down, and Christianity could become indigenous to Korea more quickly than to her neighbors. That this proved to be the case, as we shall soon see, as we develop this study further.

²⁵Exodus 20:3.

CHAPTER III

EMERGENCE OF THE CHURCH

A. Protestant Missions in Korea

The missionary discovery of Korea began with the introduction of Roman Catholicism rather than Protestantism. In 1777, a few celebrated Korean scholars, such as Chung Yak-Chun and Kwon Chul-Sin, were sent to Peking as annual envoys to present the Korean Emperor's compliments and gifts to the emperor of China.¹ While there they came into contact with Catholicism and became interested in its new doctrines. Upon their return to Korea they began to expound these doctrines, as they understood them. A few other people were attracted, and a study group was formed. In the winter of 1783 one of its number, a young man by the name of Lee Soong-Hun, was sent to Peking, was converted there, and was baptized. He returned to Korea in the spring of 1784, and baptized his friend Lee Duck-Cho.² They at once began to preach Catholic doctrine in all earnestness. Little by little the company of believers grew. However, suspicion and criticism soon broke out and the Christians were ordered to give up their faith on penalty of death. The issue at stake was the Catholic church instruction that prohibited its members from engaging in ancestor worship. This was a very sensitive issue and provoked

¹L. George Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1970), p. 32.

²Ibid., p. 32.

persecution, since Korea was a Confucian country at that time, and ancestor worship was a central element in the state control of the people.

Among the believers, Thomas Kim was the first victim. Following his persecution, a nation-wide search for Christians was undertaken, and those who were seized suffered imprisonment, cruel torture, and eventual execution. A succession of persecutions took place. In the severe persecution of 1866, many perished. Unfortunately, no accurate estimate of the number of its martyrs can be made, but by all accounts they numbered in the hundreds. It was during this suffering that the Roman Catholic church was planted in Korea. Suffering was not confined to the Catholics. When Protestantism came to Korea it also experienced opposition, persecution and suffering. Everett N. Hunt Jr. wrote on the effect of Catholicism on the beginning of Protestant missions in Korea:

The difficulties surrounding the earlier introduction of Catholic Christianity created a greater problem to Protestant beginnings than the indigenous religions did. Because Catholic Christianity was perceived to be a political threat, thousands of Koreans had been killed for professing Catholicism. In the worst year of persecutions -1866- three French priests were also martyred.³

1. Protestant Pioneers. Protestant mission work in Korea dates from 1884 with the arrival at Seoul, on September 20, 1884, of Dr. Horace H. Allen and his wife.⁴ The Allens came to Korea two years after

³Ibid., p. 32.

⁴Ibid., p. 97.

the Korean-American treaty of 1882, which permitted American citizens to trade at the open ports of Korea and to erect residences in them. At that time, Korea needed foreign medical doctors, and Allen, soon after his arrival, was given the unusual opportunity of serving the royal family. By saving the life of Min Yong-Ik, nephew of the queen, he won the favor of the court and was made the court physician. At his request, a government hospital was established in 1885, and Allen was placed in charge of it.⁵

Following Dr. Allen's arrival, Rev. H. G. Underwood and Dr. J. W. Heron of the same mission, and Rev. H. G. Appenzeller and Dr. W. B. Scranton of the American Methodist Episcopal Church landed at Inchon, Korea, on the same day, April 5, 1885.⁶ They were the first clerical missionaries. Their coming marked the dawn of a new age in the history of the church in Korea. However, it needs to be kept in mind that before the Protestant Christians arrived, Roman Catholics had already been in the country for decades and had been persecuted; the Gospels had already been translated and printed in the native script by John Ross; Chinese Christian literature had already been distributed within the peninsula; and many rumors of the Christian faith and the Christian concepts of God had already crossed the northern border of the nation from Manchuria.

⁵Ibid., p. 106.

⁶Ibid., p. 115.

At the beginning of their evangelistic work, the missionaries were understandably cautious and limited the first church services to the foreign community. They even notified the government when they were held. However, in time, the Gospel of Jesus Christ gradually spread out among the Korean people. The first Protestant Korean to be baptized on Korean soil was Mr. Ro Dohsa.⁷ In the spring of 1887, Underwood baptized three other Koreans who were brought to him by Suh Sany-Yun, who had brought the Korean Gospels from Manchuria to his country in 1883.⁸

In September of 1887 the first congregation, the Saemoonan Presbyterian church, was organized with fourteen charter members and two elders.⁹ In the next year, however, a government interdict was announced, prohibiting all propagation of this new religion. From May to September of that year, all religious services were suspended and there was great fear of persecution among the small groups of Christians that had begun to emerge.

This storm soon passed, and the popularity of missionaries grew. Because these missionaries had complied with this interdict, a favorable impression was created among government officials. The law against the propagation of Christianity remained on the state books for some years, but it was not enforced. By 1890 it became apparent that Protestant missions were in Korea to stay. After this

⁷L. H. Underwood, Underwood of Korea. (New York: Revell, 1918), p. 55.

⁸Paik, p. 139.

⁹Ibid., p. 140.

initial storm had passed, the church in Korea grew rapidly year by year, assisted by the devotion and intense labor of its missionaries.

In addition to the work of both the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the American Methodist Episcopal Church, several other Protestant churches sent their missionaries to Korea during this early period.

One of them was the Southern Presbyterian Mission from U.S.A. They first sent missionaries to Korea in 1892, partly because of the influence of Rev. Underwood, who had spoken about the opportunities in Korea on his first furlough in 1891.¹⁰ Their first station was established in the Chulla Province, southern Korea, including Che-Ju Island.

Another group was the Australian Presbyterian Mission and their first missionaries, Rev. J. Henry Davis and his sister, who arrived in Korea in October 1889. On the trip to Pusan, Davis contracted smallpox, and died in 1890. The news of his death served as a challenge to his church to send new missionaries, and they arrived in 1891. The Australian Presbyterian Mission mainly covered the Kyung-Sang province, including Pusan city in the southern-part of Korea.¹¹

The Canadian Presbyterian Mission also commenced work in Korea, along with the other Presbyterian groups, in 1892. They covered the Ham-Kyung Province in the northeast, including Kan-Doh,

¹⁰Roy E. Shearer, Wildfire. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), p. 158.

¹¹Ibid., p. 158.

Manchuria.

Another addition to these presbyterian missionaries, another methodist mission group entered the country in 1896. It was the American Methodist Episcopal Church, South. They occupied parts of the central and eastern areas of Korea.

Several other churches also came into being in Korea besides the above: Holiness Church established by the Oriental Mission Society in the U. S. A. in 1907, the Church of England in 1889, and the Salvation Army in 1919.

2. Motivation of Missionary. In order to understand the motivations behind the early missionaries to Korea, I would like to make a brief reference to the missionary movement in America in the latter part of the 19th century. This movement was largely the result of the Evangelical Awakening which began with Wesley, Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards in the 18th century. Kenneth Scott Latourette has described this awakening as follows:

It was characteristically protestant and stressed the authority of the Scriptures, salvation by faith alone, and the priesthood of all believers. It made much of a personal religious experience, of a new birth through trust in Christ, commitment to him, and faith in what God had done through him in the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection. Indeed, some beliefs were so widely held by most of those touched by the awakening that the faith held by all came to be known technically as "Evangelical." The awakening was intensely missionary.¹²

One of the many results of this awakening a century later was the Student Volunteer Movement among college, University and

¹²Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity. (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), II, 1019.

theological seminary students. It began in America and soon spread throughout the English-speaking world. Latourette also described this movement:

On the campuses voluntary student Christian movements sprang up and flourished. In the latter part of the century these were chiefly Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations. Through the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, a protestant organization which as we have suggested, had its birth in 1886 at a student Christian conference under Dwight L. Moody at Mt Hermon, Massachusetts, and which spread rapidly, thousands from the colleges, universities, and theological seminaries went to other lands to spread the faith and to plant and nourish churches.¹³

Most of the early missionaries to Korea made their decision for foreign mission work either directly or indirectly as a result of these movements. When the Inter-Seminary Alliance met at Hartford, Connecticut in 1883, there were present two future pioneer missionaries to Korea: Horace G. Underwood, who represented the New Brunswick Theological Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in America, and Henry G. Appenzeller, who was a methodist from another New Jersey institution, Drew Theological Seminary.

On July 28, 1884, the Presbyterian Mission Board appointed Rev. Underwood as the first missionary to Korea.¹⁴ Rev. Appenzeller also received his appointment during Christmas week in 1884, as the first missionary to Korea under the Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁵

Thus, the spiritual foundation of the Student Volunteer Movement was the 18th century evangelical awakening. This meant

¹³Ibid., II, 1257.

¹⁴Paik, p. 109.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 111.

that its distinctive theology naturally became characteristic of the early church in Korea. As Protestants they stressed the authority of the Scriptures, salvation by faith alone, and the priesthood of all believers. As evangelicals they stressed, in addition, the necessity for conversion, the new-birth, the inner witness of the Spirit, the call to scriptural holiness, and the obligation of all Christians to confess Christ, to engage in evangelistic outreach and to seek the evangelization of the world.

3. Mission Strategy. At the end of the nineteenth century, Korea was one of the youngest Protestant foreign mission fields, and missionaries in Korea had naturally used the methods that had been previously developed in Japan and China. The method known as the Nevius method, was also studied and tried with considerable success. Actually, it has been said that the reason for the rapid growth of the Korean church was this method. I would like to review and analyze its contributions to church growth in Korea.

In 1890 a group of seven young missionaries, just beginning their work in Korea, sent an invitation to Dr. John L. Nevius, a Presbyterian missionary working in northeast China, asking him to give them two weeks of instruction in the missionary methods which he had first set forth in a series of articles in the Chinese Recorder in 1885. It should be noted that, at that time, this method was not popular in China.

Dr. Nevius visited Seoul in 1890, and after describing his methods, in detail, to the seven missionaries and their associates,

he rejoiced that within a relatively short time, this methodology gained practically unanimous acceptance among the missionaries. In the years that followed, all new missionaries were given a copy of Nevius' booklet and were required to pass an examination on its contents.

At the time of the adoption of Nevius method, there were only 100 communicants in the total Korean church, but today there is a full grown, self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing church of over seven and a half million protestant church members.

Palmer summarized the Nevius method in accordance with the Nevius booklet, "The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches",¹⁶ as follows:¹⁷

(1) Make personal evangelism and wide itineration accepted methods by the missionaries.

(2) Make the Bible central in every part of this work.

(3) Make self-propagation the duty of every believer, including the newest converts. All should be teachers of other and learners from those better fitted. Every individual and group should seek by this method to extend the work.

(4) Make the local congregation self-governing: every group under its chosen, unpaid leaders; every circuit with its own paid helpers, who will yield to pastors; every circuit meeting training

¹⁶John L. Nevius, The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1899).

¹⁷Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity. (Seoul: Hollym, 1967), pp. 27-28.

the people for eventual leadership in the district, provincial and national movement.

(5) Make the local congregations self-supporting: all chapels shall be supplied by the believers; each group, as soon as founded, shall begin to contribute toward meeting the circuit helper's salary; every school shall receive, at most, partial subsidy, and that only when being founded; no pastors of single congregations shall be supported by foreign funds.

(6) Make systematic Bible study available to every believer. Group Bible study shall be conducted by a leader or circuit helper. Every leader and helper shall himself be involved in the Bible classes.

(7) Apply strict discipline enforced by Bible penalties.

(8) Further co-operation and union will exist with other bodies, or at least work for their association at the level of the territorial division.

(9) Prohibit interference in lawsuits or in any similar matters.

(10) Extend general helpfulness to the people by resolving the problems of their economic life, wherever possible.

In discussing missionary methods, Nevius required that they should be biblical. However, he did not claim infallibility for his statements of what God's word has to say about missions. Therefore, believing that these principles were founded on the Scripture, the young missionaries in Korea made them their mission policy.

Another emphasis of the Nevius method was the church's expansion and widespread evangelization without sacrificing either

intensive work in one locale or the indoctrination of new converts. Nevius preached self-support without sacrificing the fundamental principle of dependence on God. He preached self-government while providing for the establishment of the government as soon as the people were able to take the leadership. He also preached the necessity of using each Christian, whatever his station in life, in the work of the ministry. However, this does not mean that he did not insist on a fully-trained and well-equipped leadership for the churches.

His illustrations are drawn largely from his own work in China, but most of them could be duplicated, with slight change, in homelands or in other lands, because they result from applying biblical principles. Where these principles have been tested, notably in Korea and by certain missions in Ceylon, Madras, Japan, Uganda, West Africa, and by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in South China, they have been found to be workable and the results have been the envy of many. It is strange that these methods have been adopted by so few in other mission fields.

We call particular attention to Nevius's emphasis on the principle that each person should remain in his own calling. He was deeply interested in improving the lot of his Christian brothers and sisters, wherever they were. Indeed, long before modern social movements and rural programs were inaugurated, Nevius was helping Chinese farmers improve their lot with the introduction of fruit trees. This is quite understandable, for the principles he set forth, and which they were seeking to follow, were but indications of the Chinese

determination to fulfill the Lord's Commission, not only to train disciples in all nations, but also to teach the disciples all things and to bring the gospel to bear in every phase of life.

Moreover, those who have, from the very beginning, followed Nevius in his pattern of making the work self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing, have found that the more consistently they followed these principles, the freer they have become. Moreover, they have largely avoided the painful period of transition which often comes to young congregations when the authority and financial support of the mission are withdrawn. This has necessitated that the work begun in some other way has had to be shifted from the home agency to the national church. The Korean church, since it was greatly influenced by the Nevius method, has, from the beginning, possessed the sort of authority that goes with responsibility as well as the joy and freedom that go with sacrificial giving. This means that the painful period of transition is largely obviated.

On the other hand, there have been certain criticisms of this method, especially arising from the training of the Korean ministry. In 1896 W. D. Reynold set forth his ideals for the training of the Korean ministry, based on the Nevius method, and outlined the following three negative and four positive principles.¹⁸ Negative: (1) Don't let him know for a long time that you have an idea of training him for the ministry; (2) Don't employ him as a preacher or evangelist

¹⁸W. D. Reynold, "The Native Ministry" Korean Repository. (May 1896) 200-201.

on foreign pay if you can help it; (3) Don't send him to America to be educated, at any rate in the early stage of mission work.

Positive: (1) Seek to fit him to a high plane of spiritual experience. Let him strive, above all, to be a "Holy Ghost Man"; (2) Ground him thoroughly in the Scripture and in the cardinal facts and truths of the Christian faith; (3) Train the young pastor-to-be to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"; (4) As Korean Christians develop their culture and modern civilization, the church should raise the standard of education of her ministers. Seek to keep their education sufficiently in advance of the average education of the people to secure their respect and prestige but not enough ahead to excite their envy or feelings of separation.

Many well educated Korean church leaders have commented upon the Nevius method. Representative among them would be George L. Paik. He wrote:

We appreciate the caution and care that the missionaries employed in training the Korean ministry; we also recognized the high motives in the policy we have just quoted. Even the best intentions, however, when they are carried to an extreme, often have bad results. The whole policy seems to us not to have been based upon far-sighted vision. Self-respect and self-reliance are most to be looked for among educated leaders, and these Korean leaders were to be successors to the service that missionaries themselves had rendered to the Korean church. The intellectual training and cultural character of Korean minister should have been elevated to a high plane in order to avoid an invidious comparison and wide chasm between him and the foreign missionary. It is strange, moreover, that the missionaries should have minimized the intellectual standard of the Korean minister.¹⁹

¹⁹Paik, p. 216.

Why should it be necessary that the missionary should have college and theological training, while his successor, the Korean minister, should be educated just a little above his parishioners? As we have already shown, Christianity took its root among the lower and unlearned classes of the people. The intellectual caliber of the minister, which was raised just above this class, could not be high. The rising younger generation went to Japan and other countries for education in arts and science while the Christian ministry in the Korean church was composed of men of the past generation without a modern education. Thus the Korean ministry, instead of securing the respect and prestige of the people, received exactly the opposite.²⁰

Even though there have been some criticisms of the Nevius method, it has greatly contributed to the success of church growth in Korea.

4. Summary. For the success of the Nevius method in Korea, it may be explained that the method was fitted, to a large extent, for the setting and the frame of reference of the Korean people at the end of the nineteenth century.

During the first stage of missionary work in Korea, the people, who had lived under Confucianistic disciplines for a long period of history, had some degree of relevance to American fundamentalism that affected the Nevius method.

In the cross-cultural mission, the relevance of the message to the people caused a high impact among the people. The Gospel, therefore, must be transmitted to the people with a hearer-oriented method.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 216-217.

Thus, in the original founding of local groups, in the securing of buildings for meeting places, in the selection of group and circuit leaders, in the original simple forms of church organization, in the personal work of individual Christians, in the Bible class system, in the self-support idea which was applied to every phase of the work - Evangelistic, educational, and medical - the Nevius method has proved its worth. As Charles Allen Clark pointed out: "any one who has followed through the discussion and consulted the authorities will be convinced that the church, from the beginning, has followed the Nevius plan with remarkable fidelity and significant success."²¹

As the result of the labours of the early missionaries and the effectiveness of the Nevius method, the church gradually emerged in Korea at the end of the nineteenth century.

B. Indigenous Church

1. Han-Gul Bible. After the Japanese had driven the Russians out of Korea in the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, they began to take over the country in a systematic way. The Korean people were beginning to experience the breakdown of their ancient civilization under the stress of the twentieth century. They saw that those nations most influenced by the Christian movement were the ones that possessed what appeared to be the highest civilization and culture, and, turning from

²¹Charles Allen Clark, The Nevius Plan for Mission Work Illustrated in Korea. (Seoul: Christian Literature Society, 1937), p. 269.

the old, they sought the new. As William Newton Blair revealed, "all eyes were turned and many Christians saw in the church the only hope of the country and... the country wanted a leader and the Christian church was the strongest, most influential, single organization in Korea."²²

Missionaries, naturally, were deeply aware of these aspirations - that motives other than spiritual were inclining the Korean people to the church. As a result, they laid the church's foundation in the Bible training classes to insure that all professing members were truly converted to God. These classes, held throughout the country, in both rural and urban areas, proved that, more than anything else, Bible classes accounted for the rapid growth and revival climate of the Korean church in those early times.

The bible training class system began in 1890 in Underwood's study in Seoul, with seven men attending. These Bible classes grew rapidly, along with the growth of the church. In 1904 it was reported that sixty percent of all church members and catechumens were attending one or more of these classes. By 1909, in the section of Korea served by the Northern Presbyterian Mission, there were about eight hundred classes with an aggregate attendance of 50,000, or twice the number of communicant members. The effect of this intensive and extensive study of the Bible cannot be overemphasized.²³

²²William Newton Blair, Gold in Korea. (Topeka, KS: Ives, 1946), p. 61.

²³Shearer, Wildfire, p. 55.

The great religious awakening generated by the Bible training classes intensified the passion of the people for winning others to the new faith. Missionaries made special efforts to crystallize the decisions of many members during the time of the national Bible training class which met at Pyongyang at the beginning of January, 1907. This class met for a ten-day session and engaged in Bible study according to the established pattern. The evenings, however, were entirely devoted to special evangelistic preaching. At one of these evening sessions, an outbreak of revivalism took place, and started an emotional evangelistic movement which spread over the country. When the class closed, the people who had witnessed the revival went to their homes in the interior and spread the news among fellow believers in the villages. As the message was carried from place to place, longing and desire for a renewal of spiritual experience were created in the minds of the people. Thus the whole Christian church experienced a hitherto unknown power, and they soon united their efforts in city-wide evangelistic campaigns which gathered a large number of new converts into the church.

Another nation-wide effort for the speedy evangelization of the country was launched in 1909 - 1910 and came to be known as Million Souls Movement.²⁴ In 1909 three young missionaries of the Southern Methodist Mission at Songdo felt the lack of power in their evangelistic work and believed that, in their community, the momentum of the great

²⁴Everett N. Hunt, Jr. Protestant Pioneers in Korea. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1980), p. 82.

awakening of 1907 had begun to wane. They resolved to devote time to Bible study and prayer. For that purpose they went to a mountainside with a few Korean converts and spent a week in prayer. Through the influence of the three, the Southern Methodist Mission in Korea finally adopted the slogan: "A Million Souls for Christ." The watchword was a bold one. When it was adopted only eight thousand, including catechumens, were enrolled in all the protestant churches. Missionaries, however, estimated that there were about two hundred thousand who were leading Christian lives at that time.²⁵

In spite of the efforts made to guarantee the success of the undertaking, when the year closed the million had not been gathered. Even so, a great many conversions had taken place, and this, in itself, increased the evangelistic zeal of the people and established concern for evangelism as the tradition of the church for generations to come.

According to Charles Allen Clark, the Bible study movement was directly attributable to the Nevius method, which emphasizes the Bible, already mentioned in the previous chapter. As Clark wrote:

With the Bible central in all the work, with Bible class system as in Korea, and the Sunday schools, and Bible institutes and daily vacation Bible schools and the Bible clubs and Bible correspondence course and Bible in family worship in homes, there has come a driving force that some fields do not seem to have. When a man accepts the Bible as God's book of authority and believes that in it God is speaking direct to him, if the thing grips him, he will want to tell his neighbors this Good News

²⁵Paik, p. 385.

and self-propagation is as natural as breathing. Then, when he finds that this personal evangelism of his is taking more time from his business than he can afford, just as a matter of course, he will want to help pay for some person to do the work for him; not for the Church or even as related to the Lord, but just as a job of his own that is his duty and one which he hires someone else to do in his stead.²⁶

Another reason for the growth of the Bible study movement was the Han-gul translation of the Bible - the use of the vernacular Korean script. Han-gul provided a unique advantage for the Christian evangelism of Korea. This Christian use of the vernacular popularized it throughout all segments of the society. It can be said that, because this renaissance of Han-gul was brought about by the Christian church, all Koreans could not but respect this institution, even though they might not yet be its members.²⁷

It should be added that the Korean language bears almost the same relation to Chinese that English does to Latin. English has retained its own distinct grammatical structure, while drawing an immense number of words from the Romance dialects for purposes of embellishment and precision. The same holds true of Korean. Korean has never surrendered to Chinese grammar, and yet has borrowed largely from the Chinese glossary as convenience or necessity has required. As Homer B. Hulbert pointed out, "Chinese may be called the Latin of the Far East."²⁸

²⁶Clark, p. 271.

²⁷Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity. (Seoul: Hollym, 1967), p. 75.

²⁸Homer B. Hulbert, The Passing of Korea. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969), p. 301.

Actually, written Korean had been committed to the use of certain Chinese characters for the expression of ideas from the time of the Silla dynasty when Korea mastered the Chinese writing system. Besides using Chinese characters, Koreans had tried to develop and formulate what is known as Idu.²⁹ This was to further literacy among the masses. This system of letters, however, was never really suited to the expression of the Korean spoken language, and it fell into disuse.

It was King Sejong (1418-1450) of the Yi dynasty who finally invented the Han-gul system. King Sejong appears to have realized that writing, to be purposeful, should be made accessible to the common people, as indicated by his statement:

Due to the fact that the language of this land is different from China's, there is no basis for communication of the written word among the ignorant masses; they are very often unable in the long run to express all that they wish. Greatly concerned as I am by this handicap I have devised 28 letters for the convenience of every individual who should be able to easily master them.³⁰

Although a number of Han-gul texts appeared in the latter half of the fifteenth century, Chinese still remained the language of government during most of the Yi dynasty and was used exclusively by the educated class and Yang-ban (nobility). This new writing was looked upon as On-mun,³¹ which was thought to be suitable only for uneducated women. Consequently, even though Korea was equipped with

²⁹Idu (吏讀) is a system of writing Korean sound by employing Chinese characters.

³⁰Chosum Wang-jo Sillok. (Seoul: Kuksa Pyonchan Committee, 1955), p. 702.

³¹On-mun (謄文) is a vulgar script of Korea.

an efficient native alphabet, the country failed to use Han-gul, and it remained for the nineteenth century missionaries to give it wide and sustained popularity. It was the dawning of a new era for Korea when these men found this treasure and used it in Bible translation.

The Gospel of Luke was the first part of the Bible to be translated into the Korean language. This was done by John Ross, a United Presbyterian Church of Scotland missionary in 1873. He prepared this translation at his base in Manchuria, near the Korean border, on the ancient trade route from Seoul to Peking. It was along this route that Korean merchants went to trade with the Chinese. This Korean translation was completed and printed in Han-gul, its phonetic script, in 1882. When the first missionaries, Horace Underwood and Henry Appenzeller, arrived in Korea, they were surprised to learn that the land already had the Ross Scripture in use.

As the first missionaries in Korea, they quickly realized that Han-gul, itself, provided them with a unique advantage for their evangelistic work. As James Gale wrote in his book, "Korean in Transition":

Korea's native script is surely the simplest language in the world... it has come quietly down the dusty ages, waiting for, who knew what? Never used, it was looked on with contempt as being so easy. Why yes, even women could learn it in a month or a little more; of what use could such a cheap script be? By one of those mysterious providences it was made ready and kept waiting for the New Testament and other Christian literature. Up to this day these have had almost exclusive use of this wonderfully simple language. Tied in the belts of women are New Testaments in common Korean; in the pack of the mountaineer on his brisk journeying; in the wallbox of the hamlet home;

piled up on the shelf of the living room are these books in On-mun telling of Yesu (Jesus), mighty to save.³²

The Korean people saw at once that if the scriptures and other Christian literature printed in this simple script, reading could be made universal. By making this decision they tended to alienate the literacy classes for a time, but they were able to utilize an instrument of incalculable value for introducing the Christian movement to the common people. The missionary revival of this simple vernacular script opened up a new day for the Korean people.

As the result of the Han-gul revival, Christianity made a large impact on the people in that it spread literacy among the common people far beyond the community of believers. As Kay Il-seung, who recognized this influence, has pointed out:

It can be said that the missionaries and the church popularized the people's alphabet, and brought it into the general use even in non-Christian circles. It is still the custom to go to church with Bible and hymn book in hand. Until recent years, almost all of the adherents of the church were reading in On-mun... Think of introducing the wealth of the Scriptures to a large portion of the people through the people's alphabet which they had not been using. At once nearly all the Christians were literate. Suddenly as it were, a people who sat in darkness, saw the Great Light through the printed page in Han-gul.³³

The renaissance of Han-gul by Christian missionaries, as we have seen, opened a new era in the vernacular literacy of Korea, and it also helped the church to grow in Korea from its earliest times.

³²James Gale, Korean in Transition. (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1909), p. 138.

³³Il-seung Kay, "Christianity in Korea" (Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, in Virginia, 1950), pp. 116-117.

2. Revival Movement. The revival movements of 1903-1907 bore a close relationship to church growth in Korea. Edwin Orr wrote in his book, "Evangelical Awakenings in Eastern Asia" as follows: "The Korean Revival of 1903-1907 has its full effect upon church growth in Korea."³⁴

These famous revivals in the northern provinces reached their peak in the great religious upheaval of 1907 at Pyongyang known as "Revival of 1907". They marked the climax of the first twenty five years (1886-1907) of the protestant movement. As Samuel Hugh Moffett pointed out: "It was a spiritual revival, explosive and spectacular, sweeping through the peninsula from 1903 to 1907, that touched off the massive ingathering of the church and permanently stamped its character with revivalistic fervour."³⁵

The great revival of 1907 started in a Bible class led by a Canadian Methodist, Doctor R. A. Hardie, in Wonsan in northeast Korea. In August of 1903, a group of seven missionaries, including Hardie, engaged in a week of study and prayer at Wonsan.³⁶ Hardie confessed his faults before the missionary body and before the Korean church. This led others to confess. The group began to reflect on the state of the church, and soon all were confessing their failure in permitting numbers of Korean people to enter the church as interested disciples rather than as regenerated believers.

³⁴J. Edwin Orr, Evangelical Awakening in Eastern Asia. (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), p. 32.

³⁵Samuel Hugh Moffett, The Christians of Korea. (New York: Friendship Press, 1962), p. 52.

³⁶Paik, p. 367.

In October of 1903, the Scandinavian missionary advocate, Fredrik Franson, arrived in Korea. Shortly after he arrived, a week of meetings was scheduled by Hardie for Franson to address the missionary community. The confession of sins was an outstanding feature of these meetings and those which followed. And yet, it should be stated that this public confession was without abuse.

The results of this early movement were seen in the transformation of the lives of missionaries and church members, whose morality was lifted to a plane of sincerity and purity never before attained. Their brotherhood in this common religious experience led to an immediate acceleration of growth in church membership.³⁷

During August of 1906, various missionaries in Korea met in Pyongyang for a week of prayer and Bible study led by Hardie. All of them shared a deep concern for the needs of the country in its time of humiliation at the hands of the Japanese. They studied the First Epistle of John, and were refreshed by this Bible study.

In January, 1907, when the Bible study class met at Pyongyang, as we have noted, an outbreak of revivalism took place. According to reports, all present were emotionally moved and felt a poignant sense of their mental anguish before the Lord. Allen D. Clark quoted from W. N. Blair who gives the following account of what occurred at the time:

The evening meeting connected with the Bible conference began January 6th, in the Central Church (in Pyongyang), with more than 1500 men present. Women were excluded for lack of room.

³⁷Orr, p. 26.

Different missionaries and Korean leaders had charge of the evening meetins, all seeking to show the need of the Spirit's control in our lives and the necessity for love and righteousness...

Monday morning, we missionaries met and cried out to God in earnest. We were bound in spirit and refused to let God go until He blessed us. That night, it was different. Each felt, as he entered the church, that the place was full of God's presence. Not only the missionaries, but the Koreans testified to the same thing...

After a short sermon, Rev. Graham Lee took charge of the meeting and called for prayers. So many began praying that Dr. Lee said, 'If you want to pray like that, all pray', and the whole audience began to pray out loud, all together. The effect was indescribable. Not a confusion, but a vast harmonizing of sound and spirit, a mingling together of souls moved by an irresistible impulse to prayer. It sounded to me like the falling of many waters, an ocean of prayer beating against God's throne. It was not many, but one, born of one Spirit, lifted to one Father above...

God is not always in the whirlwind, neither does He always speak in a still, small voice. He came to us in Pyongyang, that night, with the sound of weeping. As the prayer continued, a spirit of heaviness and sorrow came upon the audience. Over on one side, someone began to weep and, in a moment, the whole congregation was weeping...

As soon as we were able, we missionaries gathered at the platform and consulted, What shall we do? If we let them go on this way, some will go crazy? Yet we dared not interfere. We had prayed to God for an outpouring of His Holy Spirit upon the people and it had come. Separating, we went down and tried to comfort the most distressed, assuring them of the forgiveness of God...

Finally, Dr. Lee started a hymn and quiet was restored with the singing. Then began a meeting, the like of which I had never seen before, nor wish to see again unless, in God's sight, it is absolutely necessary. Every sin a human being can commit was publicly confessed, that night.³⁸

When this awakening started, it was explosive and spectacular in nature, and it brought a massive influx of converts into the church. Those who had participated in the revival went to their homes and spoke of what they had seen and heard. As their reports were carried

³⁸Allen D. Clark, A History of the Church in Korea. (Seoul: Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1971), pp. 160-164.

from place to place, an intense longing and desire for the same spiritual experience was created in the minds of the people. The revival quickly spread all over the nation, as leaders who had experienced it first in Pyongyang were invited to come to various places in the country and conduct similar meetings.

This movement, which began quietly among the Methodist missionaries at Wonsan, had now received a new impetus and was destined to become nation-wide. As a result, in the five years that followed (1906-1910), there was rapid growth. The net gain for all the church of Korea was 79,000 which was more than the members in Japan after half a century of Protestant effort, or twice the number of Protestants in China in the first eighty years of mission work.³⁹

This great awakening marked the spiritual rebirth of the Korean church. The unique religious experience gave to the Korean church a character which is its very own. Following the revival, it has continued to serve as a moral and spiritual force. Korean Christians of today look back on the movement as one the great sources of their spiritual life.

The revival in 1907 has often been described in solely religious terms. It was due overwhelmingly to spiritual causes. Some, however, pointed out that there were also certain non-spiritual factors. Roy E. Shearer says that "the growing hopelessness of the Korean people as they began to be pressed by the Japanese", was a

³⁹Orr, p. 29.

non-spiritual factor.⁴⁰ Spencer J. Palmer describes two localized problems as somewhat determinative, (1) longstanding social cleavage between north and south of the country, abetted by the discontent of the Sangmin (the commoners), and (2) the political military struggles which centered in north Korea at the time.⁴¹

Even though we would admit that there were non-spiritual factors in the movement, we would not discount the evident working of God. Samuel Hugh Moffett has written: "The revival was the spiritual seal on the founding character of the Korean church."⁴² In a few short years, this seal was further confirmed. The membership of the Korean churches increased fourfold.⁴³

Now we come to the question of the results of the revival. Did the revival cause church growth? The explosive growth prior to the revival and the slow growth after its nation-wide movement, indicates that the revival of 1907 was not directly connected with church growth. Actually, the revival did not even cause a large increase of professions of faith following the evangelistic campaigns held in Pyongyang.

According to Donald McGavran, "under certain conditions revival may be said to cause growth. Under others, its relationship to church growth is so distant that apparently revival can occur

⁴⁰Shearer, p. 53.

⁴¹Palmer, pp. 82-83.

⁴²Moffett, p. 52.

⁴³Clark, p. 171.

without growth and growth can take place without revival. Careful consideration of the subject is necessary if we are to understand the function of each in God's purpose of redemption."⁴⁴ McGavran explains the relation of revival to church growth as follows:

(1) Feeding on God's word is a precondition of revival; (2) Revival leads to holy living; (3) Revival gives tremendous power; (4) Revival drives people to proclaim the Gospel.⁴⁵

The revival in 1907 reflects a close correspondence with McGavran's theories, except for item 4. The revival did not drive men to proclaim the Gospel. They stayed in stage 3. They were given power to confess Christ before their neighbors, but their sense of being quickened by God did not manifest any deeper concern for church growth.

George Paik says that this great revival marked that spiritual rebirth of the church, resulting in better understanding and more open fellowship between Koreans and missionaries, in an improved moral tone of the Christian community, and in the establishment of patterns of personal and corporate Bible study and prayer.

The revival was a spiritual revivification of Christian believers rather than a movement to convert non-Christians.⁴⁶

A result of the Great Revival was to renew the commitment of the people inside the church, and to convict them of sin as well as

⁴⁴Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), p. 163.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 170.

⁴⁶Paik, p. 377.

provide them with the assurance of God's forgiveness. It did not focus on evangelism and ingathering.

Through this revival, it seems that the Korean church was given a new impetus to put its focus on the inner life of the church, cherishing and rediscovering the traditional forms and formulations by which the church strengthens itself.

3. Early Korean Church. McGavran states the grand object of foreign missions as follows: "the true goal of missionary effort is independent congregations and churches, and usually the best way to reach the goal is to plant the first church according to indigenous church principles."⁴⁷

This object of foreign missions is based upon the final commission of the Lord: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Only discipling the nations, reconciling men of all races to God in Christ, bringing all nations to faith and obedience, and preaching the Gospel to the whole world causes the emergence of new church.

The first missionaries to Korea recognized this goal, and only two years after their arrival in the country, they began to organize churches along these lines. As we have seen, the Saimoonan Presbyterian Church of Seoul and the Chungdong Methodist Church were

⁴⁷McGavran, p. 346.

both organized in 1887. Later on, the Chungdong Church, in the capital city, became one of the most influential methodist churches in the country. In the process of time, churches were established all over the nation. The efforts of missionaries were largely devoted to planting churches with trained leaders in strategic cities, even in the early years. They successfully used the Bible study system for the nurture of new converts.

From about 1898, Pyongyang city in the northwest, became the center of Christian work in that area. This was the area where the first colporteurs had brought the Ross Gospels years before. By 1900, there were 2500 church members and some 400 catechumens reported in the Presbyterian district, alone. The Methodists also had their centers, in Anju, Wonsan and in other districts of north Korea. By 1896, they had 21 full members and 30 probationers. By 1905, there were 648 full members and 1403 probationers.⁴⁸

The four years from 1907 to 1910 were marked by great events both in the political and Christian realms. First, the Japanese protectorate was established in 1905 and resulted in total annexation in 1910. The political independence of the country came to an end. Second, in terms of Christianity, this period began with a great spiritual awakening, which was followed by nation-wide evangelistic campaigns known as "the Revival of 1907" and "the Million Movement."

⁴⁸Clark, p. 126.

This was the period of the rise of the indigenous church, despite the political problems which were so closely interrelated with its emergence. G. Paik and S. Palmer wrote as follows:

In spite of - and because of - the political changes, the Christian community continued to grow, almost without interruption throughout the country.⁴⁹

Each of these crises in turn had a profound effect upon Korean attitudes toward Christian religion, although there was not always an exact correspondence between specific crisis and increases in membership.⁵⁰

Because of such growth, the Presbyterians took the necessary steps for the organization of the independent Korean Presbyterian church. After some years these preparations were completed, and the organizational meeting was held on September 17, 1907, in the Central Church in Pyongyang. By 1911 the presbytery had grown to the point that the church seemed ready for the formation of a general assembly. In order to prepare for this, seven presbyteries were organized before March 1912. On September 1, 1912, the meeting of the first general assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church was held, as planned in Pyongyang, and 52 Korean pastors, 125 elders and 44 missionaries attended. The Methodist Church was formed along similar lines.⁵¹

The Korean church's evangelistic work was not limited to the immediate area surrounding existing congregations. In 1907, when the first seven graduates of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary were

⁴⁹Paik, p. 262.

⁵⁰Palmer, p. 92.

⁵¹Clark, pp. 176-177.

ordained to the ministry, one of the seven was sent to Cheju Island as a missionary. In 1909, a minister was sent to Vladivostok, in Siberia, and one to Tokyo for missionary work among the Koreans living in Japan. In 1910, the first workers were sent to North Manchuria on a similar mission. In 1912, when the General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church was formed with its seven presbyteries, three pastors and their families were set aside for missionary work in Shangtung Province, China.

It has been said that the reason for the church's rapid growth in Korea was the Nevius Method. Dr. McGavran has also pointed this out as consonant with Indigenous Church Principles.⁵² The Nevius method, as we have already seen, is widely known as the method designed to produce a self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing churches. We can still discern these characteristics in the Korean church. These have not changed since its earliest beginnings.

We have already said something of the part the Korean Christians played in the expansion of the Christian church throughout Korea, especially in the north. In its early period, the most productive evangelistic work was done by the Koreans themselves.

Self-support. Self-support was one of the initial aims of the church in Korea. First of all, self-support meant assuming financial responsibility for evangelistic work and financing the establishment and maintenance of church and ecclesiastical activities.

⁵²McGavran, pp. 337-338.

Every missionary adhered strictly to the Nevius method and insisted on the principle of complete self-support from the beginning. The new converts could not have church structures unless they built them, nor could they have teachers unless they supported them.

This self-support principle had a wholesome effect on the establishment of the church. It taught the people the spirit of independence and the habit of systematic giving, and made self-propagation of the faith possible. Furthermore, self-support not only aided the rapid naturalization of Christianity, but also hastened self-government.

Above all, persistence in this policy avoided the westernization of Korean Christianity and prevented, in part, acceptance of the impression that the church was an exotic and foreign institution. As Korean Christians supported their work, they naturally wished their voices to be heard in mission councils. It is very possible, indeed, that the principle of self-support is the main cause of the rapid and substantial growth of the church.

Self-propagation. In the early stages of mission work, the actual work of Gospel propagation was largely done by Korean believers. They established churches, instructed new converts, preached at worship services, visited the sick and ministered to the needy. They supported themselves, remaining in their own callings, while they preached their newly acquired faith to their fellow men and women.

It is interesting to inquire into the underlying causes of the extensive Christian propaganda undertaken by the newly converted

Koreans. There were certain factors which made this self-propagation possible. Above all, there was the socio-cultural phenomenon which McGavran has called the "people movement", with a cultural understanding of a large family system.⁵³

A Korean village is generally composed of a number of closely related families. If the first man converted in the village happens to be influential, his conversion might result in the mass conversion of the whole village. On the contrary, when a less important member of the village became a Christian, he faced a hostile environment. When the majority of the village turned to the new religion, the minority either conformed or moved away.

Thus, self-propagation began within the family circle and among close friends. Not only was the emerging Christian fellowship an attractive feature, but by winning members of his own family and friends, a convert might contravene all possibility of persecution. There was too, the desire for recognition. When a man or woman was used significantly to bring in more believers and thereby increase the membership of a church, they soon became its leaders and even its local preachers. Through the people movement, as we have also seen here, the church grew rapidly and became indigenous in a relatively short period.

Self-Government. In Korea, church organization received only slight emphasis. In the case of the Presbyterian missions, until 1901

⁵³Ibid., pp. 297-298.

the Korean Christians had no voice in the council meetings. Even then, Participation was in the form of a training relationship in order to instruct helpers in ecclesiastical matters, rather than to allow them to function as members of even the church courts. There were two council sessions, one in English and the other in Korean. Missionaries attended both, while the Koreans participated in the latter only.⁵⁴

The year of 1911 was a great time for church organization, for it was in that year, in the Taiku Presbytery, that action was taken for setting up a general assembly in 1912. The transition from the single all-Korean presbytery was relatively easy. The sub-presbyteries were simply advanced to the status of full presbyteries with their borders and personnel unchanged, and the presbytery became, in turn, the assembly. From that time onward it became a self-governing institution and has remained so up to the present day.

4. Summary. An indigenous church, in common usage, is defined as a church that is self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. These three conditions are not essential ingredients in making the church indigenous.

The indigenous phenomena of the early Korean church were fruits of the devotional endeavours of the missionaries from America and the effective receptivity of the Gospel by the Korean people.

⁵⁴Paik, p. 307.

From the cross-cultural perspective, the Han-Gul Bible translation and the revival movement were good bridges between the missionaries and the people. These bridges, with other growing factors, greatly facilitated the process of the Korean church becoming an indigenous church.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE GROWTH

A. Church Growth in Korea

We have seen in the previous chapters that, among the nations of the world in our day, the Korean church is one of the most rapidly growing churches. Korea is the only country in continental Asia where the largest and most active religious group in Christian - more than twenty percent of the population. This church began early to grow rapidly, even within the lifetime of the pioneer protestant missionaries. In the early twentieth century, Charles A. Clark stated:

...we find in that little country of Korea, today, apparently one of the most remarkable churches on any mission field in the world; an independent, national church... Fully self-governing in every sense of the word, preeminently self-propagating, and almost self-supporting... It seems to have found a way of utilizing its foreign missionary associates to the full without sacrificing its own autonomy.¹

Church growth never takes place in a vacuum. There are many factors which have contributed to its growth. In several respects the Korean church today retains the characteristics which made it unusual from the beginning.

One striking affecting church growth was the dominant personalities of the missionaries who came to Korea in those early days. Palmer pointed out that they were "American missionaries of puritanic

¹Charles Allen Clark, The Korean Church and the Nevius Methods. (New York: Revell, 1930), p. 13.

zeal and Wesleyan fervor, and the fundamentalism of the prairies."²

According to Palmer, the typical missionary of those early years was a person who still kept the Sabbath much as their New England forebearers had done a century earlier. They looked upon dancing, smoking, card-playing and the drinking of beer as sins in which no true follower of Christ should indulge.

In theology, they were strongly conservative. They held as a vital truth the premillenarian view of the second coming of Christ. Higher biblical criticism and liberal theology were considered as dangerous heresies.

They also employed an authoritarian approach in their ministry. Baptism was given only after careful catechetical instruction, and Sabbath observance was insisted upon. Furthermore, among baptized members, failure to keep the Sabbath or to attend worship regularly without legitimate excuse was considered sufficient reason for the exercise of disciplines. Those who were disciplined were debarred from taking part in the communion service.

In fact, during this first stage of missionary work, American fundamentalism fitted, to a large extent, the Korean church because Koreans had lived under Confucianistic disciplines for many years. Its tendency toward legalism would effect church growth in Korea both positively and negatively with passage of time.

It created an other-worldly tendency among Korean believers.

²Spencer J. Palmer, Korea and Christianity. (Seoul: Hollym, 1967), p. 26.

Even today, many Korean Christians look upon the Gospel as a means of escape from this present evil world and as insurance of a better life after death.³ This other-worldly tendency became a characteristic of the church, with its puritanic zeal, Wesleyan fervor, and prairie-church fundamentalism, along with membership and the proliferation of congregations throughout Korea.

A second important feature was, as I have discussed in chapter three, the priority of Bible study, both by congregations and by individuals. The importance placed on Bible study was intended to encourage every Christian to study the Bible individually and to transmit to others what each had learned. The actual work of evangelism was largely done by Korean believers rather than by the missionaries.

An analysis of this method shows that the effectiveness of Bible study may be explained from the cross-cultural perspective. According to Kraft's theories: "communication is most effective when the message is understood by the receptor to relate specifically to life as the receptor lives it" and "when the receptor discovers... the relevance of the message to his or her own life."⁴ To have impact, the Bible must be understood by the hearer in ways that fill real needs.

³George L. Paik, The History of Protestant Missions in Korea 1832-1910. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1970), p. 426.

⁴Charles H. Kraft, Christianity in Culture. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 150.

For this communication principle, Nida gives us a reason for employing the method with an illustration of the colporteur of selling the Scriptures.

No effective communication can possibly take place unless the participants stand in relevant, understandable relations to one another. The source must have a valid role within the context or his words will be relatively meaningless. It is for this reason, for example, that the Bible societies have consistently employed the principle of selling the Scriptures. This practice is followed not because of profit involved in the sale - in fact it would often be cheaper to give New Testament away and easier to raise money from the American public if appeals were made on that basis. However, there is a purpose in selling, namely, to provide the seller with a legitimate role and a valid reason for communicating a message about this all-important book. The colporteur can thus travel about as a book salesman (and there are always many in all literate societies), he can present his wares and try to explain to people in the house or marketplace why they should buy this book. Moreover, he thus has an opportunity to give his own witness to the value of the book for him.⁵

Moreover, the puritanic zeal and Wesleyan fervor of the early missionaries from America had relevance to the daily lives of the people who were under the influence of primitive Shamanism. Tongshik Ryu characterized Shamanism in Korea as including "songs and dances", a tendency toward "getting into ecstasies", fervour of participants to be immersed into the practices of an exorcist.⁶

When people passed on to their neighbours what they had understood through the Bible classes, the new converts could more easily comprehend the Gospel. Paul seemed to understand this principle of communication when he said, "for with the heart man

⁵Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission. (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1960), p. 178.

⁶Tongshik Ryu, The History and Structure of Korean Shamanism. (Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1975), p. 353.

believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:10). In this way, early in its existence, church membership increased rapidly.

A third factor behind this phenomenal growth was, as I have noted in chapter three, individual conversion to Christianity as much as through what is called "people movements". The people movements, as multi-individual Christian movements, involve the joint decisions of sizeable numbers of individual members who all come from the same society.

In the matter of conversion, Western individualism has led many of the open-minded to advocate only conversions that occur one by one. This causes some people to ignore the fact that such "people movements" are recorded rather frequently in the Scriptures.⁷

If converts respond according to the way of life of the missionary, their conversional interaction with God will be in the form of the culture of the witness. They are extracted from their own culture, and their understanding of Christianity will create in them a sense of alienation from their own culture.

On the other hand, if converts interact with God in the forms of their own culture, the normal problems of growing in Christ will not be complicated by a different culture. The early converts of the Korean church accepted God in their own frame of reference and in the form of people movements.

⁷See Acts 2:41, 4:4, 10:44, 16:31-34.

Latourette and Nida emphasized that this cross-cultural principle of the people movements must be applied in overseas mission fields to make the church grow and foster its development into an indigenous church.

More and more we must dream in terms of winning groups, not merely individuals. Too often, with our Protestant, nineteenth century individualism, we have torn men and women, one by one, out of the family, village, or clan, with the result that they have been permanently deracinated and maladjusted. To be sure, in its last analysis, conversion must result in a new relationship between the individual and his Maker, in radiant transformed lives. Experience, however, shows that it is much better if an entire natural group - a family, village, caste, or tribe - can come rapidly over into the faith. That gives reinforcement to the individual Christian and makes easier the Christianization of the entire life of the community.⁸

At the same time, one must recognize the principle of communicating to receptors who are in position to respond. If the village is likely only to respond as a unit, this is the unit which must be confronted; or, if people can respond only as families, the challenge must be to families. Not that people are to be rejected who break away individually from the normal social patterns and wish to register their convictions. But in general the receptors should be so challenged as to make it possible for the decision-making unit in the society to recognize the full implications of their corporate responsibility.⁹

Because of the phenomenon of people movements, the Korean church was able to grow rapidly, and it inevitably became an indigenous church in a relatively short time.

A fourth factor related to church growth was that of unusual revivals which took place during the period 1906-1910. During these years the growth was phenomenal, Alfred W. Wasson wrote that more

⁸Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of the Expansion of Christianity. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1939), VI, 159.

⁹Nida, pp. 178-179.

adults were baptized than in the preceding nine and the following ten years put together. The gain in church Korean members was twice the number of Chinese who had become Protestants in China during eighty two years of mission work there.¹⁰

The foundation of this spiritual revival was largely the emphasis on Bible study. The Bible study classes became vehicles for spiritual awakening. The revival of 1907, especially, was a movement of God. This revival was characterized by an outpouring of the Spirit that awakened the masses, revived the church and moved many people towards the Christian faith.

Many of the things that took place in these revivals were not unlike the phenomenon that accompanied the first Pentecost. These were in part a repetition of the phenomenon of the early church described in the Acts of the Apostles. As in these early days, the Korean church insisted that converts must be grounded in the Word of God and also encouraged in personal evangelism. Their task was to bring outsiders into the church. One senses a parallel with the New Testament situation in which the Christians went about preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).

Shearer pointed out a non-spiritual factor of the growth: the growing hopelessness of the Korean people as they began to be pressed by the Japanese. In another comment he noted the political military struggle which centered in north Korea at the time.¹¹

¹⁰Alfred W. Wasson, Church Growth in Korea. (New York: International Missionary Council, 1934), p. 51.

¹¹Roy E. Shearer, Wildfire. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), p. 53.

As if proving these opinions, the results of the revival were not directly connected with the mission of the church. Actually, the revival did not cause a large increase of professions of faith. There were not large numbers of conversions following the evangelistic campaigns held in Pyongyang. The revival did not drive the people to proclaim the Gospel.

The revivals transferred the focus to the inner life of the church, cherishing and rediscovering the traditional forms and formulations by which the church strengthened itself. The missionaries and other workers forgot their mission, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the task of being involved in the issues of the day.

Johannes Blauw states that the mission of the church is not one of several valid aspects of activity, but our Lord's final commission given to the church.

There is no other church than the church sent into the world,
and there is no other mission than that of the church of Christ.¹²

Similar to the phenomenon that "worldview" embodies for the people, the fundamentalism of the early missionaries from America conditioned the Korean church to view the world with an other-worldly outlook. Thus, the revival managed only to renew the people inside the church, and did not manifest any deeper concern for growth in the following years.

A fifth reason for the rapid growth was the Han-Gul translation of the Bible - the use of the vernacular Korean script. This Han-Gul

¹²Johannes Blauw, The Missionary Nature of the Church.
(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 121.

provided a unique advantage for the church. At the same time, the Christian use of the vernacular script popularized the Gospel throughout all spheres of society. Because this renaissance of Han-Gul was brought about by the Christian church, the people could not but respect the church, even though they might not yet be its members.

From the cross-cultural perspective, the renaissance of Han-Gul Christians in Korea may be explained as a revitalization movement that brings a new set of beliefs to the Korean vernacular script and restores meaning to the existence and renewal of the Han-Gul.

As we have seen in chapter one, conversion must take place within the worldview of the people. It must include turning away from old ways toward new ways and affecting a new set of values to every sphere of activity of the society. Paul seemed to understand this cultural phenomenon when he said: "therefore if any man is in Christ he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Han-Gul translation of the Bible by the Christian church resulted in the process of combining the pre-existing Han-Gul with a new value. This process made a large impact on the people in that the Han-Gul Bible spread the Gospel and literacy among common people far beyond the community of the church. By the use of the Han-Gul, the church grew rapidly, and became an indigenous church in a relatively short time.

In addition to the Han-Gul translation of the Bible, the Protestants' employment of a concept of the hierarchy of the gods with the supreme God was another unique advantage for church growth. The church designated "Hananim" as the Heavenly God and used this name for God in the Bible.

By developing the Shamanistic conception of a hierarchy of the gods into the Christian God, the church made new converts easily. People could become Christians without crossing cultural barriers. All Koreans, whether Christian or not, were aware of this conception because the component of faith in heaven had been an integral part of Korean thought since primitive times.

Recently, the Catholic church in Korea, knowing the unique advantage of the Protestant use of the concept of God, also adopted Hananim for use in their church.

Since cultural symbols stimulate meanings within the minds of their receptors, the Han-Gul translation of the Bible and the concept of Hananim correspond as closely as possible with those in the minds of the Korean people. They could hear and understand the Gospel in this receptor-oriented presentation.

B. Summary and Conclusions

Tremendous growth has taken place in the Christian church in Korea ever since its establishment in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This study has traced the reasons for this growth in the past and the questions of the part played in the growth by

missionaries and national Christians and has attempted a brief survey of major factors of growth across cultural barriers.

In concluding this study, I would like to underscore the complexity that is in God's and the people's faithfulness to the Church. They are the faithfulness of missionaries to the calling of God and the Korean Christians' faithfulness to their commitment to the Lord. In addition to the two above, God's faithfulness to both missionaries and Korean Christians is the crucial factor.

Above all, it must be said that, while using human instruments in the environment of human society, the Holy Spirit alone caused men's and women's hearts to turn to Christ, the Savior. God gave the growth to the church in the past years.

As God's instruments, however, human agents have greatly affected church growth. There were two major factors that have contributed to growth: effective communication between the missionaries and the Koreans, and the transformation that occurred among the Koreans because of the church.

First, hearer-oriented intercultural communication helped the church to grow. The missionary task is to communicate Christ cross-culturally. The pioneer missionaries tried their best to interpret the biblical message in terms of the Korean culture and to avoid using their own languages, thus transmitting the original message in terms that would be informative and persuasive to its hearers.

By using this approach, the missionaries were able to become familiar with their hearers, and the people could become Christians without being aware of cultural barriers. Although the Nevius method has been criticized as favoring isolationism, the method was intended to be practical in all respects.

The Bible classes were a powerful force in producing a strong church. Since the people of Korea inherited a Confucian respect for good literature and had lived by their classics for centuries, when the Bible was given to them they respected the message it brought concerning this life.

Second, some culture changes initiated by the church helped to effect growth. Transformation is a matter of change in the central conceptualization of a culture: the "worldview". True Christian conversion by cross-cultural evangelism always takes place at the worldview of the new converts, and this process of conversion may result a culture change in the society. The transformation, however, is not ordinarily easy, since human behaviors of long standing are not easily or rapidly replaced.

The early missionaries and Christians effected Korean culture changes by gaining new converts to Christianity. These changes helped to strengthen the church. The Han-Gul translation of the Bible is one of the examples. As out-culture advocates, the missionaries found and used the Han-Gul as an instrument of incalculable value for taking the Christian movement to the common people. They translated the Bible into the Han-Gul, a simple vernacular script.

The renaissance of the Han-Gul by Christian missionaries opened the people's eyes to the true value of it. Then, as cultural insiders, the people innovated the society by replacing the Han-Gul with Chinese characters. Another illustration is the conception of Hananim, the name of the Shamanistic hierarchy of gods, which was translated into the Christian God in the Bible. Today, Hananim is no longer the name of Shamanist god, but of the Christians' God.

Effective cross-cultural communication based on the hearer-oriented message, and the transformation of the culture by the Christian faith greatly contributed to church growth in Korea during its early years.

We must learn from the growth-promoting factors in the early Korean church, and refer to the final commission of Jesus Christ, who had the nature of God but became like human beings and appeared incarnate. If we follow Him across cultural boundaries to reach the unreached people (Philippian 2:6-8) and the Gospel communicate to them if we baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything the Lord commanded us (Matthew 28:18-20), then, every day, the Lord adds to the church those who are being saved (Acts 2:47).

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